The Influence of Political Efficacy on Voter Turnout in South Africa

by
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Abstract

Voter turnout has been in gradual decline in South Africa since 1994. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout. Political efficacy consists of two dimensions: internal efficacy (the belief in the individual's ability to act effectively in the political environment) and external efficacy (the individual's belief in the ability of the political system to be responsive to the public's needs). The study adopted a quantitative survey research design to address the research problem. It used data from the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP) 2014 and 2019 post-election surveys. The study utilised both bivariate and multivariate analyses to answer the research questions. The bivariate analysis was used to explore the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout in the 2014 and 2019 general elections. The results show that both dimensions of political efficacy have a moderate correlation with voter turnout at the two elections. However, external efficacy (measured as the perception that the government cares about what the public thinks) has a stronger correlation with voter turnout than internal efficacy (measured as the ability to influence and understand politics). A further binary logistic regression was undertaken to examine this relationship by controlling for the effects of other established predictors of voter turnout. The model indicated that at least one of the political efficacy dimensions was statistically significant in predicting voter turnout in both the 2014 and 2019 elections. In other words, after controlling for the effects of other key predictors of voter turnout, one's perceived ability to influence government action (an indicator of internal efficacy) still helps to explain voter turnout. This study discussed the impact of these results, the potential development of this study, and recommendations for future research.

Opsomming

Kiesersdeelname in Suid-Afrika het sedert 1994 geleidelik afgeneem. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die invloed van politieke doeltreffendheid op kiesersdeelname op individuele vlak te ondersoek. Politieke doeltreffendheid bestaan uit twee dimensies: interne doeltreffendheid (die geloof in die individu se vermoë om doeltreffend in die politieke omgewing op te tree) en eksterne doeltreffendheid (die individu se geloof in die vermoë van die politieke stelsel om op die publiek se behoeftes te reageer). Die navorsingsontwerp wat gebruik is om die navorsingsprobleem te ondersoek, was ’n kwantitatiewe opname. Data van die 2014- en 2019-naverkiesingsopnames van die Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP) is gebruik. Tweeveranderlike en meerveranderlike ontledings is gebruik om die navorsingsvrae te beantwoord. Die tweeveranderlike ontleding is gebruik om die verhouding tussen politieke doeltreffendheid en kiesersdeelname in die algemene verkiesing van 2014 en 2019 te ondersoek. Die resultate het getoon dat albei dimensies van politieke doeltreffendheid ’n magtige korrelasie met kieserdeelname by die twee verkiesings gehad het. Eksterne doeltreffendheid (gemeet as die persepsie dat die regering omgee wat die publiek dink) het egter ’n sterker korrelasie met kiesersdeelname as interne doeltreffendheid (gemeet as die vermoë om die politiek te beïnvloed en te verstaan) gehad. ’n Verdere binêre logistiese regressie is onderneem om hierdie verhouding te ondersoek deur kontrole van die gevolge van ander gevestigde voorspellers van kieserdeelname. Die model het getoon dat ten minste een van die dimensies van politieke doeltreffendheid statisties beduidend was in voorspelling van kiesersdeelname in sowel die 2014- as die 2019-verkiesing. Met ander woorde, ná kontrole van die gevolge van ander hoofvoorspellers van kiesersdeelname help die individu se waargenome vermoë om die regering se optrede te beïnvloed (’n aanwyser van interne doeltreffendheid) steeds om kiesersdeelname te verklaar. Die impak van hierdie resultate, die moontlike ontwikkeling van hierdie studie en aanbevelings vir verdere navorsing word ook bespreek.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

To what extent can it be said that the South African electorate believes in the utility of their vote to yield a significant effect on the nation's democratic system? Political theorists have long maintained that citizens are likely to vote if they believe that their vote will influence the political system and that the system will be responsive to their vote (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1963; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Clarke et al., 2004). This phenomenon is known as political efficacy, and it refers to the extent to which ordinary citizens feel that their vote is influential and will be responded to by public officials (Litt, 1963; Corbetta, 2007: 221).

Political efficacy can be understood as the citizen's perceptions about his or her own ability to influence the political system. These perceptions are classified into two forms, first beliefs about one's ability to understand politics and therefore participate effectively in it, and secondly, beliefs that one's participation will be effective (Neimi et al., 1991; Craig and Mattei, 1991). These two are referred to as internal and external political efficacy, respectively. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. It argues that the declining levels of voter turnout are a result of the South African's electorate believing that their vote has no power in influencing the political system (internal efficacy) and that the politicians and political institutions are unresponsive to their concerns (external efficacy) (Balch, 1974; Converse; 1972). This chapter outlines the background and rationale of the research. Additionally, it describes the research objectives and research questions. Finally, it describes the significance and scope of this research as well as its limitations.

1.2 Background and Rationale

Among the most prominent trends in contemporary South African politics has been the gradual decline in voter turnout since the nation's first democratic elections in 1994. The 2019 general elections marked a watershed in the country's electoral history as voter turnout among registered voters fell to 66%. Despite an increase in the number of registered voters, turnout was 7% lower compared to the 73.5% turnout in the 2014 elections. The decline in voter turnout us more prominent among young people in South Africa. A study conducted by Schulz-Herzenberg (2019b) shows that turnout as a share of the eligible voting age population (VAP)

declined from 57% to 49% between 2014 and 2019. Many young South Africans did not register to vote in the recent 2019 elections. This is evidenced by a decline in voter registration from 58% in 2014 to 49% in 2019 among 18–29-year-olds. Moreover, the registration levels among 18–19-year-olds fell from 33% to 19%, translating into a 14% decline (Schulz-Herzenberg 2019b).

This alarming decline in voter turnout has been associated with a myriad of individual-level and contextual factors in the voter behaviour literature in South Africa. These include the voter's race, age, level of education (Lodge, 1999; Ferree, 2004 and 2006; Fakir et al., 2010; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2018), sense of party identification and support, interest in election campaign (Habib and Naidu, 2006; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019), perception of government performance service delivery, election campaigns and strength of opposition parties (Mattes, 1999: 245-246). While these factors contribute to an individual's propensity vote in elections, hardly any studies have examined the impact of political efficacy on the South African voter turnout. In other words, few scholars ask whether the decline in turnout is related to levels of political efficacy among South Africans.

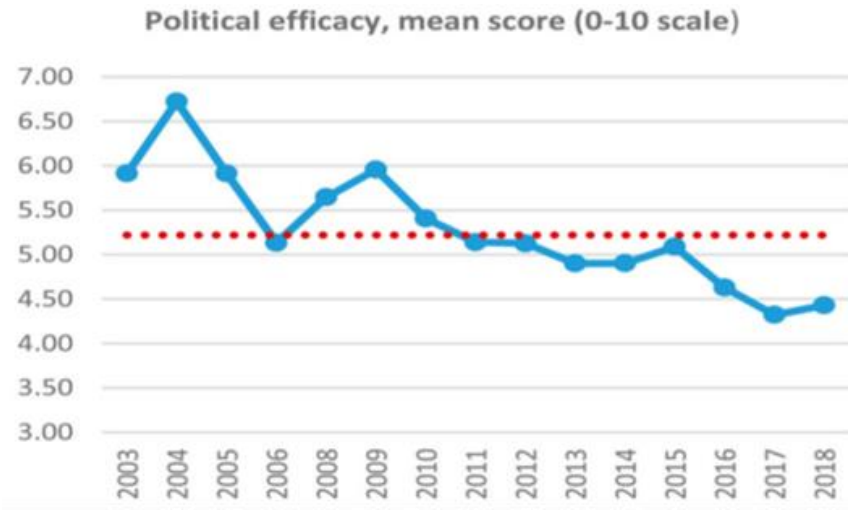
In general terms, political efficacy refers to the individual's belief in his or her ability to make a difference in the political domain, that is to influence by means of political participation (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1963; Bandura, 1997). As stated above, the existing literature makes a distinction been two dimensions of political efficacy: internal efficacy and external efficacy (Balch, 1974; Acock et al., 1985; Craig et al., 1990). Internal efficacy is defined as the "competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics" (Craig et al., 1990: 290). External efficacy refers to the "beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authority and institutions to citizen demands" (Craig et al., 1990: 290).

In light of the decline in in voter turnout in South Africa, there is a good reason to investigate whether the South African electorate believes that their votes are consequential for government accountability. Low voter turnout indicate that the South African democratic system is facing a crisis of legitimacy. In particular, it indicates that the electorate does not consider their votes as influential and that they have lost faith in the ability of the political to respond to their needs. This can be accounted for by the stagnating economy, high levels of unemployment, poor service delivery and increasing corruption in the public and private sectors (Southall, 2019; Roberts et al., 2019). There is no doubt that the increasing gap between the needs of the ordinary voter and the actions of the politicians leaves little to be desired when it comes to

voter turnout. While it is no secret that low rates of voter turnout weaken democracy, the increasing levels of powerlessness, disillusionment and frustration towards the government authorities and institutions play a significant role.

Research by the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) show that levels of political efficacy among the South African electorate has been declining since the early 2003, with 2018 representing a pre-electoral low point (see Figure 1) (Robert et al., 2019: 489). The 2019 survey conducted by the South African Reconciliation Barometer (SARB) shows that South Africans have low levels political efficacy, especially with regards to perceived responsiveness of elected representatives. In particular, the results show that more than half (58%) of South Africans surveyed believed that their vote did not make a difference, an increase from 51% in 2017 and 48% in 2015. In terms of internal political efficacy, the 2019 survey revealed that almost half of the respondents (48.4%) agreed with the statement that they do not consider themselves "well qualified to participate in issues affecting [their] country". This contrasts with the 37% of respondents who agreed with the statement in the 2017 SARB round. Likewise, in 201 only 65%of respondents agreed that "[…] political leaders and politicians do not care much what people like [them] think". Again, the percentage of those in agreement with this statement rose to 74% in 2019. Elnari Potgieter (2019: 12) concludes that the low political efficacy levels mean that "South Africans feel that formal processes of accountability are not effective in getting their message across to authorities". As a result, they choose to stay at home during elections (Karp and Banducci, 2008).

Figure 1. 1 Trends in political efficacy since 2003 – 2018



Source: Roberts et al. (2019: 489); HSRC SASA 2003-2018

This study is motivated by these results. The objective is to consider the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. It argues that the decline in voter turnout in South Africa since 1994 is partly as a result of the concurrent decrease in political efficacy among the citizenry. The motivation in exploring this relationship is that citizens in democratic societies, "should feel that they have some power to influence the actions of their government" (Wright, 1981: 69). Thus, a thorough examination of this relationship is necessary for a healthy democracy.

1.3 Problem statement

While the literature on political behaviour contributes to the understanding of electoral disengagement in South Africa, little is known about the extent to which political efficacy influences voter turnout in South Africa. Despite the myriad of evidence of the influence of political efficacy in voter turnout that exist globally[1], very little theoretical and empirical research has been conducted on the topic in South Africa (exceptions include Mattes and Richmond, 2014; South African Social Attitudes Survey, 2018; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019b; South African Reconciliation Barometer, 2019). The existing literature on the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout in South Africa is inadequate in part because researchers have measured the concept using one or two items associated with one dimension of the concept (either internal efficacy or external efficacy) despite the fact that it is generally measured as an index developed from numerous indicators (Balch, 1974). Furthermore, most of the research has focused on the influence of the youth's political efficacy on political participation. In this manner, the South African literature has not sufficiently examined the influence that political efficacy has on voter turnout.

In their study about youth political participation in South Africa, Mattes and Richmond (2015) concluded that young South Africans have low political efficacy. However, their measurement includes only one dimension of political efficacy - internal efficacy with an index asking, "Whether people feel able to get together with others to make MPs and local councillors listen to them". Their results are important as they show that political efficacy is the second most

[1] Political efficacy has been found to be a reliable predictor of political participation (including voting in elections) in the United States and United Kingdom (Finkel, 1985; Balch, 1974; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Clarke and Acock, 1989; Niemi et ai, 1991; Morrell, 2003); Israel (Cohen et al., 2001), Germany (Finkel, 1987; Becker, 2004) and in twenty-seven democracies (Karp and Banducci, 2008).

statistically significant predictor of contacting officials, after membership in a community group. In a similar vein, Schulz-Herzenberg (2019b) found that that low turnout among young South Africans can be explained by their low levels of external efficacy.

Unlike the two studies above, the study by Roberts, Struwig and Grossberg (2017) on voting attitudes among men and women, included the two dimensions of political efficacy (internal and external efficacy). Their study concludes that political efficacy has a positive influence voter turnout in local elections. Nonetheless, the authors warn that political efficacy beliefs, may, over time, be "challenged and eroded by rising disaffection about the supply of democracy and performance of political institutions in the country" (Roberts et al., 2017: 30-31).

Considering the limited literature on the South African case study and the methodological gaps in the existing literature, this study aims contribute by investigating the extent to which South Africans believe that their vote will wield a significant effect on the democratic system. Additionally, this study explores the influence of the two dimensions of political efficacy (internal and external political efficacy). This is particularly important as the relationship between each of these two dimensions with voter turnout is expected to vary in strength and nature.

1.4 Summary of the literature review

The concept of political efficacy was first defined in the voting behaviour literature as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties" (Campbell et al., 1954: 187). As such, it relates to the perceptions of personal competence and effectiveness an individual has in relation to his or her political environment (Easton and Dennis, 1967). As stated above, political efficacy understood as being composed of two dimensions: internal efficacy and external efficacy (Lane, 1959; Balch, 1974). Internal efficacy refers to the individual's confidence in his or her own capabilities to understand and influence political affairs (Niemi et al., 1991; Morrell, 2003, Shultz, 2005; Beaumont, 2010). Internal efficacy is related to the individual's political knowledge, political interest, and political engagement (Almond and Verba, 1963; Pateman, 1970; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Clark and Acock, 1989; Conway, 2000; Pinkleton and Austin, 2001; Cohen et al.,2001; Morrell, 2003; Kenski, and Jomini, 2004). Moreover, Condon and Holleque (2013: 168) associate this dimension with the one's

confidence in exercising agency or control. Internal efficacy is, therefore, important because citizens' who feel capable are more likely to participate in political system, electorally or otherwise (Dalton, 2008a).

In contrast, external efficacy refers to the degree to which an individual perceives the political system as responsive to his or her demands (Niemi et al., 1991). External efficacy has been strongly associated with "political responsiveness" (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982), political trust and diffuse political support (Balch, 1974; Iyengar, 1980; Craig et al., 1990). Individuals with high levels of external efficacy believe that the political authorities care about their concerns and as such, have confidence that their individual action will lead to policy consequences. As McEvoy (2016: 1161) notes, individuals likely to maintain diffuse support for the political system, "even if their interests are not immediately translated to political outcomes". However, if they perceive the political system as unresponsive, citizens may be less likely to support it and participate in it, irrespective of their sense of internal efficacy. Therefore, external efficacy, unlike internal efficacy is a crucial indicator of democratic health (Craig et al., 1990).

Research has long considered political efficacy to be an important predictor of various types of political participation (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Sullivan and Riedel 2001, Burns et al., 2001; Cohen et al., 2001) as well as an outcome of political participation (Finkel, 1985). In particular, politically efficacious individuals are more likely to vote (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1963; Balch, 1974; Milbrath and Goel, 1977; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Pollock, 1983; Conway, 1985; Finkel, 1985; Finkel, 1987; Clarke and Acock, 1989; Niemi et al., 1991; Blais, 2000; Cohen et al., 2001; Morrell, 2003; Becker, 2004; Clarke and Acock, 2004), work in election campaigns (Finkel, 1985; Finkel, 1987), contact government officials about issues of concern (Pollack, 1983), and use news media (Pinkleton et al., 1998).

Decades of research has shown that the combination of different levels of the internal efficacy and external efficacy result in different forms of participatory behaviours (Pollock, 1983; Madsen, 1987; Shingles, 1989; Zimmerman, 1989; Sheerin, 2007). For example, a study by Pollock (1983) categorised people into high or low internal efficacy and high or low external efficacy. According to this categorisation, people with increased levels of both internal and external efficacy are more likely to engage in conventional forms of participation such as voting. As a result, these efficacious people are inclined to maintain support for the political

system. In contrast, people with high internal efficacy and low external efficacy levels are more likely to partake in unconventional modes of participation such as protest action to voice out their grievances. Those with low levels of internal efficacy and high levels of external efficacy tend to show be despondent about the political system and as a result are disinclined to not participate in it. Finally, individuals with low levels of both internal and external efficacy tend to feel alienated, apathetic, and indifferent to politics. As a result, these people are more likely to withdraw from the political system. internal and external efficacy are indicators for the broader health of democracy or civil society.

The existing literature indicate that political efficacy is a significant predictor of voter turnout (Campbell et al., 1954; Shaffer, 1981; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982, Pollock, 1982; Finkle, 1985; Clarke and Acock, 1989; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). In their seminal work, Campbell et al. (1954: 104) conclude that, "the rate of voting turnout was found to increase uniformly with the strength of an individual's sense political efficacy". Empirical findings by Shaffer (1981) show that a decline in political efficacy contributed to a 67% decline in voter turnout in the 1960s. Similarly, Pollack (1982: 402) found that "half of the decline in presidential turnout between 1960 and 1980 can be attributed to the erosion of political efficacy". Furthermore, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993: 144-145) found that the sample of respondents that registered high levels of internal efficacy were about 3% more likely to vote than those with lower levels of internal efficacy. In addition, those who were externally efficacious were about 11% more likely to vote than their inefficacious counterparts.

The main thrust of the political efficacy theory is that an individual believes in his or her ability to influence and understand politics (internal efficacy) and believes that the political system will respond to his or her needs (external efficacy) is more likely to engage in electoral participation. However, this argument is difficult to investigate because researchers have focused on the validity of the measurement of the political efficacy concept at the expense of theoretical development that can help explain the mechanisms behind the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout. This limitation in the literature causes several implications such as the inability of researchers to compare findings across studies (Morrell, 2003).

1.5 Research questions and hypotheses

Taking the above literature into consideration, this study aims to answer the following three research questions and to empirically test their hypotheses.

Research question 1: *To what extent does the level of political efficacy influence voter turnout in South Africa?*

The existing literature indicates that there is a clear relationship between political efficacy and the propensity to vote, in that individuals with higher political efficacy levels are more likely to turnout to vote (Craig & Maggiotto, 1982; Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Acock et al., 1985; Finkel, 1985; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Specifically, people are most likely to vote if they believe that they are capable of understanding politics and able to influence the election process (internal efficacy), and they believe that the political system is responsive to their votes (external efficacy). In line with this argument, this study expects political efficacy to be a significant variable bearing on the individual's propensity to vote. As such, respondents with greater sense of political efficacy will be most likely to vote more than their less efficacious counterparts.

H1: The higher the level of internal efficacy, the higher the level of voter turnout.

H2: The higher the level of external efficacy, the higher the level of voter turnout.

Research question 2: *Which dimension of political efficacy (internal or external efficacy) matters more to voter turnout?*

The literature on political efficacy clearly states that political efficacy consists of two distinct dimensions: internal and external efficacy. Considering this distinction, the estimated effect of each dimension is expected to differ in relation to voter turnout. Several studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between external efficacy and electoral participation (Shaffer, 1981; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Finkel, 1985 and 1987). Unlike internal efficacy, external efficacy helps in predicting the individual's likelihood to vote. In particular, voters with high external efficacy levels are more likely to perceive politicians as responsive and trustworthy; as a result, they are more likely to vote. This study, therefore, hypothesises that people are more likely to vote based on their judgements about whether their interests are advocated for by parties and whether the elected officials are responsive to their preferences. The present study expects to find external efficacy to have a stronger correlation with voter turnout compared to internal efficacy.

H3: External efficacy matters more for voter turnout than internal efficacy.

Research question 3: *What is the explanatory power of political efficacy as a predictor of voter turnout when other significant determinants of voter turnout are held constant?*

This study does not only study the influence of political efficacy on voter turnout in isolation, but it aims to determine the relative predictive significance of this variable by controlling for other important predictors of turnout as well. The literature on voting behaviour attributes voter turnout to a myriad of factors, including the voter's education, age, race, marital status, levels of interest in election campaign, one's strength of partisanship, and an evaluation of government's national performance (Blais, 2000). In *The Voter Decides*, Campbell et al. (1954: 190) hypothesise that there will be a positive relationship between political efficacy and political participation when other significant demographic variables are held constant. As stated above, this study also expects that external efficacy will remain a significant predictor of voter turnout after controlling for the effects of other theoretically important predictors of turnout.

H4: External political efficacy is a significant predictor of the likelihood to vote after controlling for the effects of other well-recognised determinants of voter turnout.

1.6 Research objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the extent to which political efficacy influences individual-level voter turnout in South Africa.

2. To determine which dimension of political efficacy (internal efficacy or external efficacy) has the strongest influence on the decision to vote or not (voter turnout).

3. To determine the extent to which political efficacy remains significant after holding other significant predictors of voter turnout constant.

1.7 Research methodology and operationalization

In general, political efficacy and self-reported voter turnout have been analysed through quantitative research methods such as survey questionnaires (Corbetta, 2007). To achieve the above objectives and to answer the three research questions, this study will use secondary data from the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP) 2015 and 2019 post-election surveys.

The CNEP is a multi-national project of research among election study teams from around the world, coordinated by the Mershon Centre for International Security Studies at Ohio State University [2]. The CNEP data has a nationally representative sample of South African adults surveyed face-to-face shortly after the 2014 and 2019 general elections.

This study makes inferences about the relationship between voter turnout and political efficacy in South Africa. This study has four main variables and numerous control variables. All the control variables have been shown to be significant in explaining voter turnout in the literature (Blais, 2000). In addition, the measurement of each variable included in the conceptual framework is based on well-established, globally accepted measurement indicators that have been developed in numerous previous studies. The CNEP 2014 and 2019 post-election surveys datasets include the appropriate measurement of the variables that are relevant to this study. Where necessary, categories were recoded using SPSS in order to make the data more manageable for the purpose of data interpretation.

1.7.1 Dependent variable

The measurement of the dependent variable - voter turnout – is based on the universally accepted method of asking survey respondents if they voted in the recent elections (Dahlgaard et al., 2019: 590). The CNEP 2014 survey measures voter turnout by asking respondents: "Did you vote in the recent elections?" The possible response categories are (0) 'yes', (1) 'no' and (9) 'Don't know'. The variable is recoded into a dichotomous variable with (1) 'Voted' and (2) 'Did not vote'. The respondents who reported to 'don't know' if they voted are collapsed into the 'Did not vote' category. This is a standard practice. If respondents cannot recall if they voted, the likelihood is that they did not participate at the said election. Often respondents who report that they 'can't remember' or 'don't know' usually did not vote but prefer not to be honest about their behaviour because voting is a desirable action (Belli et al., 1999; Bernstein et al., 2001; Dahlgaard et al., 2019).

The CNEP 2019 survey measures voter turnout by asking respondents to the statement that best describes them regarding voting (0) *I did not vote in this election*, (1) *I thought about voting, but did not*, (2) *I usually vote, but did not this time*, (3) *I am sure I voted in the election,*

[2] https://u.osu.edu/cnep/

(8) *Prefer not to say* and (9) *Don't know*. This variable is recoded into a new dichotomous variable as follows: category (3) is comprised of respondents who (1) 'Voted'. Categories 0, 1, and 2 are combined as these are all respondents who (2) 'Did not vote'. Those who 'prefer not to say' they voted in the recent elections are filtered out of this new variable. Like in the 2014 turnout variable, those who reported that they "Don't know" whether they voted are combine with the 'Did not vote' category.

1.7.2 Independent variables

The independent variables of the study are the two components of the political efficacy – internal and external efficacy. Both the 2014 and 2019 CNEP post-election surveys measure political efficacy with a battery of questions where respondents are asked to place themselves on a Likert scale ranging from one to five, with the following response categories – (1) *Strongly Agree*, (2) *Agree*, (3) *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, (4) *Disagree*, (5) *Strongly Disagree*.

The following two items measure internal political efficacy (the individual's belief in his or her ability to understands and can effectively influence the political system):

> A – People like me do not have any influence over what government does.
>
> B – Generally, politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening.

The following statement measures external political efficacy (the individual's belief in the government's responsiveness to his or her concerns)

> C- Politicians do not care much about what people like me think.

The internal and external political efficacy scales are analysed separately, but together they create a 3-item scale to measure overall political efficacy – including the extent to which the individual believes in their capabilities to influence and understand politics as well as their confidence in the ability of the government to respond to their needs.

1.7.3 Control variables

The hypotheses of this study will be tested using both bivariate and multivariate statistical analysis. The multivariate analysis allows for the inclusion of several control variables that are

considered to be strong determinants of voter turnout. These controls are included to ensure that the tests assess the relative influence of the political efficacy variables alongside other important predictors of voter turnout and thus to ensure that the tests do not produce erroneous errors (Finkel, 1987: 449). According to previous research, demographic variables such as the respondent's age, education, and race group are connected to his or her propensity to vote (Almond and Verba, 1963, Brady et al., 1995; Tiexeira, 1993; Verba et al., 1995; Franklin, 2004; Ferree, 2004; Clarke et at 2004; Blais, 2000, Wattenberg, 2015). In addition, two psychological attachment variables are included such as interest in the election campaign and strength of partisanship (Campbell et al., 1960). The respondents' organisational membership and whether their spouse voted or not is also controlled for (Verba and Nie, 1972; Inglehart, 1990; Putman, 2000; Norris, 2000). Lastly, evaluation of government's national performance is included (Mattes, 1999).

1.8 Statistical procedures and presentation of data

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used to perform bivariate statistical analyses and the multivariate logistic regression analysis. These techniques are commonly used in social science research to identify and measure relationships between variables. The bivariate analysis is used to explore the relationship between two variables: namely political efficacy and voter turnout. Once this relationship has been identified, a multivariate analysis is undertaken, and a multiple logistic regression model is utilised to control for the effects of other established predictors of voter turnout, and thus isolating the independent effects of political efficacy on turnout in a more comprehensive model. The analysis and interpretation of the data is presented in two phases. The first is based on the results from the CNEP 2014 post-election survey questionnaire. The second is based on the results from the CNEP 2019 post-election survey questionnaire.

1.9 Significance of the study

There are at least two democratic theories that support the importance of positive political efficacy beliefs among the citizenry (Pateman, 1970; Finkel, 1985). The first theory emphasises the influence of political efficacy on political participation. As Madsen (1978: 869) notes,

> "a fundamental presumption of democracy is that citizens will feel that collectively, and sometimes even individually, they can intervene in public life to affect the course of governance".

Madsen's (1978) description of democracy points to the importance of political efficacy among the citizens. That is, for the democratic system to survive, citizens must believe that their political actions are meaningful. In particular, the citizens must believe in their capabilities to express their wishes, and that the system will, in turn respond to these wishes. Once they are confident in the responsiveness of the system, they are more likely to grant it with legitimacy (Almond and Verba, 1965; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Dalton, 2002; Valentino et al., 2009; Carter, 2011).

The second theory attributes the stability of the democratic regime to some modest levels of political efficacy among most citizens. This theory holds that as citizens submit to the authority of the political system or grant it legitimacy, they contribute to the stability of democracy. Existing research have shown that political efficacy is associated with various political attitudes that relate to democratic and government legitimacy. While political legitimacy constitutes of various aspects, one of its most crucial aspects is diffuse support. Easton (1975: 444) define diffuse support as "a reservoir of favourable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed". Diffuse support is important for the political system as it influences the extent to which a citizen accepts or rejects the political institutions and policies (Levi and Stoker, 2000: 491). Low levels of diffuse support are undesirable since they can result in democratic deconsolidation.

Like legitimacy, diffuse support is a difficult concept to measure. However, external efficacy has been used as an indicator of diffuse support (Iyengar, 1980). While diffuse support helps the citizen to tolerate unfavourable outcomes from the political system, as an indicator, external efficacy helps to shape these favourable attitudes towards the system. In other words, positive external efficacy helps to maintain diffuse support among citizens by cultivating a belief that their opinions and interest are heeded by the political representatives. Therefore, as McEvoy (2016: 1161) puts it, when it come to the difference between diffuse and specific support[3] – "high levels of [external] political efficacy allows individuals to tolerate negative economic

[3] Specific support refers to the citizens' evaluation of the responsiveness of the incumbent government authorities and political institutions to specific demands (Easton, 1975).

and policy conditions in the short term as they believe they are able to influence the system to obtain benefits in the long term".

Declining levels of political efficacy (both internal and external efficacy) are therefore, concerning as they indicate that the political system lacks legitimacy (Easton and Dennis, 1967; Easton, 1975). According to Loveless (2013: 474) the absence of political efficacy "defines civic disengagement". Politically efficacious citizens believe that their political engagement is not only possible, but also of positive utility (Weisberg, 1975). Thus, positive feelings of political efficacy can also be thought of as a political resource that inspire citizens to engage in various political behaviours that are closely associated with democratic norms (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Therefore, political efficacy is important for both the quality of political participation and for the health of democracy, because

> "The efficacious person views his political self with respect. He holds a corollary set of expectations with respects to political officials; they are concern about his vote and heed his demand. The self-evaluations and orientations toward political authorities are related to a generalised set of attributes about the political system – for example, that elections matter or that leadership circles can be influence and even penetrated" (Prewitt, 1968: 225).

This study argues that low levels of political efficacy hinder meaningful participation in politics, and as a result are a major source of the declining rates of voter turnout in South Africa (Campbell et al., 1954; Abramson and Aldrich, 1967). This study also argues that unresponsiveness of the government has contributed to a sense of cynicism among the electorate which decreases levels of political efficacy. The decline in voter turnout takes place against the backdrop of increasing corruption in government (Southhall, 2019), stagnating economy, high levels of inequality, poor service delivery and increasing unemployment, and lack of trust in government institutions such as the Public Protector (Gerber, 2020). These problems of poor governance have resulted in the electorate believing that their vote will not yield meaningful outcomes, such as holding the government accountable. In addition, it has led to citizens believing that the government is not capable of addressing these problems (Citizen Survey, 2020).

1.10 Research limitations

There are three main limitations in this study. The primary challenge in self-reported voter turnout in surveys is the problem of "over-reporting" behaviour produced by social desirability bias (Karp and Brockington, 2005). Although the surveys are anonymously conducted and the following statement: "We often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they were not registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have the time" is read to respondents to assure them that it is acceptable to admit to not having voted; respondents still report that they participated in elections even when they did not (Dahlgaard et al., 2019). As a result, this overestimates the number of people who voted and in turn, will be considerably higher than the actual voter turnout in administrative records (in South Africa's case, the Electoral Commissions official records).

While one strength of quantitative research is being able to provide data that is descriptive- that is, that captures a snapshot of a large population - it does not provide some of the crucial characteristics that is required for further data interpretation (Landman, 2003). The absence of this data means that the researcher will not be able to explain why and how political efficacy influences voter turnout in South Africa. This means that it cannot explain the causal relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout in South Africa but can only provide correlations.

The cross-sectional nature of this study presents another limitation since it cannot capture social processes, trends and change over time (Neuman,2007). The CNEP 2014 and 2019 post-elections surveys are used, and this does provide a limited longitudinal aspect over two consecutive elections. However, it is a short time span from which to draw definitive conclusions about changes over time and this study will therefore remain cautious in doing so. Regardless, it is worth studying the data in order to contribute towards the understanding of voter turnout.

1.11 Chapter outline

This research consists of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to this study, as presented above. It provides the background and research problem and outlining the research questions and objectives which guide the empirical inquiry of the study. Additionally, it briefly outlines the research methodology adopted. The second chapter is a literature review of the

existing studies on political efficacy. It also discusses the gaps and limitations, providing the justification for this study to be conducted. This chapter also provides a framework for this present study within the larger literature of voter turnout in South Africa. Chapter three focuses on the research design and methodology adopted by this study in order to describe the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout. It provides a detailed discussion of the variables that are used in this study. The chapter also provides a description of the CNEP 2015 and 2019 post-election surveys and the data analysis that is used. Chapter four presents and discusses the results of the study. It also describes the extent of the correlations between political efficacy and voter turnout and interprets them accordingly. Chapter five provides a conclusion on the key findings about the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. These implications of the results are also outlined in relations to the broader literature reviewed in chapter two. Lastly, it offers recommendations for future research on the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Despite its central importance as an indicator of democratic heath, the fundamental conceptualisation and measurements of political efficacy have remained controversial with little consensus among scholars on how to best approach the concept (Sohl, 2014). This chapter provides a discussion on how the concept has been defined and studied in the literature in order to understand why an individual would decide to vote, and as such provides the theoretical basis for this research. This chapter is divided into three parts. It starts with the conceptualisation of political efficacy and how it has developed throughout the literature. The second section explores the relationship between political efficacy and political participation and voting in particular. The final section reviews the political efficacy literature in South Africa. This study aims to highlight the limitations in the conceptualisation of political efficacy, and to some extent introduces the major debates around the measurement of the concept, which are expanded on in the next chapter.

2.2 Defining political efficacy

Political efficacy is was first defined by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954: 187) in their seminal work tittle *The Voter Decides* as the "feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process". While this research considered political efficacy as a unidimensional concept (Campbell et al., 1954; Easton and Dennis, 1967), subsequent empirical research agree that the concept can be conceptualised along two separate dimensions: internal and external political efficacy (Lane, 1959; Converse, 1972; Balch, 1974; Niemi et al., 1991; Morrell 2003) Internal efficacy refers to the "feelings of personal competence that allow the individual to understand and participate effectively in politics" (Craig et al., 1990: 290). External efficacy refers to the extent to which an individual believes in the responsiveness of governmental authorities to his or her demands (Converse, 1972; Balch, 1974). Therefore, politically efficacious citizens are those that consider themselves as competent enough to understand politics and participate in a meaningful way; they are also confident in the ability of the political system to respond to their participation (Warren, 1999).

2.2.1 Political efficacy as a unidimensional concept

In *The Voter Decides*, Campbell and Miller (1954: 187) conceptualise political efficacy as the:

> "The feeling that individual political action does have, or can gave, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change."

Campbell et al.'s (1954) definition present political efficacy as a psycho-political concept which focuses on the individual's perception of him or herself as an influential in the political environment. This belief - that one can influence their political environment is important because it makes it worthwhile for him or her to perform specific civic duties (Acock et al., 1985).

While Campbell et al.'s (1954) definition of political efficacy includes one's judgments of ability to interact with political systems as well as perceptions of the system's responsiveness to the individual. Easton and Dennis (1967) provides a definition that capture how this perception ought to be. They assert that political efficacy is:

> "…a number of interwoven sentiments. To be efficacious it would appear that a person must sense his competency at the level of his political self-identity. He must construct a psychic map of the political world with strong lines of force running from himself to the place of officialdom. He must come to believe that that when he speaks other political actors will listen. He must also internalize the expectation of competence that his political self-confidence is not easily eroded by what he will take to be the mistaken indifference which the political process frequently exhibits to his desires" (Easton and Dennis, 1967: 26).

Easton and Dennis (1967) suggest that political efficacy comprise of some degree of personal agency as well as responsiveness of the political system. To highlight the complexities of the concept, the authors assert that political efficacy comprises of three distinct aspects: the norm; the psychological disposition; and the behaviour. The normative aspect informs the expectation that in democratic systems, citizens must be able to participate effectively in political processes (Easton and Dennis, 1967). Therefore, the normative aspect refers to support for the political system by cultivating beliefs that the individual's political actions are considered in the system. These perceptions of political competence are most likely followed by action (the behavioural aspect) where the citizen "take a hand in shaping his political destiny" (Easton and Dennis, 1967: 26). According to the authors, the psychological disposition aspect refers to the

"…feeling of effectiveness and capacity in the political sphere" and subsequent studies establish it as internal and external efficacy (Lane, 1954; Balch, 1974; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Finkel, 1985; Finkel, 1987; Craig et al., 1990; Craig and Mattei, 1991; Morrell, 2003).

Easton and Dennis (1967: 29) definition of political efficacy suggest that the concept comprises of several distinct but related ideas such as the individual's ability to make a difference in the political system; the responsiveness of the government to the individual's input; the availability of means of influence to the citizens; the comprehensibility of the government functions; and the lack of fatalism (in the role of the ruler or ruled). These factors highlight the multifaceted nature of political efficacy, such that the individual may believe in his or her capabilities to understand politics and to participate effectively in the political system, but at the same time may believe that the government is not responsive to his or her political actions. Easton and Dennis's (1967) elements are shown in the various survey items used to measure political efficacy in the literature.

Subsequent research has pointed out inadequacies with these early definitions and measurements (Lane, 1959; Balch, 1974; Niemi et al.,1991; Morrell, 2005; Sohl, 2014). These studies have criticised the early conceptualisation of political efficacy, arguing that the concept is too broad as it aims to "capture many aspects of political life, attitudes and perceptions" (Sohl, 2014:27). Lane (1959) argued that researchers must distinguish between the 'image of the self' as the one primary point of reference and the 'the image of the democratic system' as another point of reference. This distinction paved a way for researchers to understand the concept of political efficacy as one that is comprised of two dimensions, that is internal efficacy as well as external efficacy (Balch, 1974). Although modern research still uses the original definition and measurement[4] of political efficacy by Campbell and his associates' (1954), researchers have attempted to develop the concept, both theoretically and empirically (Acock et al., 1985; Madsen, 1987; Cohen et al., 2001; Kenski and Stroud, 2006; Caprara et al., 2009).

[4] Campbell et al. (1954) measure political efficacy with the following five survey items:

1. "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think"
2. "The way people vote is the main thing that decides how thinks are run in this country"
3. "Voting is the only way that people like me can have a say about how the government runs things"
4. "People like me don't have any say about what the government does"
5. "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicate that a person like me can't really understand what is going on"

Response scale: Agree or Disagree.

2.2.2 Political efficacy as a two-dimensional concept

The early studies discussed in the previous section have treated political efficacy as a one-dimensional concept (Campbell et al., 1954; Easton and Dennis, 1967). However, further analysis of the original five items used to measure political efficacy revealed the need to distinguish between the individual's perceptions about his or her own capabilities to understand and influence the political processes as well as their confidence in the responsiveness of the political system (Lane, 1959). Robert Lane (1959: 149) was the first to criticise the broad nature of the concept of political efficacy, arguing that it comprised of "two components - the image of self and the image of the democratic system".

An earlier study by Rosenberg (1954: 354-355) also highlighted this dichotomous nature of perceived political effectiveness:

> "The individual can focus on either the subject or the object of action. On the one hand, he can focus on certain characteristics of himself; e.g., he is insignificant, powerless, or incompetent. On the other hand, he can focus on the characteristics of the objects to be influenced, e.g., political representatives pay no attention to him, [and] political machines run things just as they please, and so on. But if his representative pays no attention to him, this may be either because he is too unimportant or because the representative is unresponsive to the political will."

While Rosenberg's (1954) definition highlights the distinction between the individual's perceptions of his or her personal role in politics and those of the political environment, he does not openly argue for the separation (much like Almond and Verba (1963) and Easton and Dennis (1967)). By the 1970s, researchers began to confirm that political efficacy consists of two separate dimensions. For example, Philip Converse (1972: 334) proposed that the two components of political efficacy be labelled as "personal feelings of political competence" and "trust in system responsiveness" which later became known as 'internal' and 'external' political efficacy, respectively (Balch, 1974).

According to this conceptualisation, internal political efficacy concerns the individual's "competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics" (Craig et al., 1990: 290). This dimension of efficacy is generally similar to Almond and Verba's (1963) notion of 'subjective political competence'. People with high levels of internal efficacy are confident in

their ability to "understand how to take part in politics, and are not intimidated by the challenges, conflicts or disagreements that occur in that arena" (Valentino et al., 2009: 208). Most of the internal efficacy definitions include some ideas of cognitive capabilities or the ability to perform certain actions in order to influence the political system (Clark and Acock, 1989; Sullivan and Riedal, 2001; Caprara et al., 2009).

In contrast, external efficacy refers to the individual's "beliefs that the political system is amendable to change through individual and collective influence" (Caprara et al. 2009: 1002). This dimension simply relates to the extent to which the individual believes in the ability of the political system to respond to his or her concerns. (Craig, 1979: 229). Valentino et al (2009: 308) maintain that individuals with high levels of external efficacy "believe the system reacts when pressure is applied by citizens, regardless of whether or not they are willing or able to apply that pressure themselves". The conceptualisation of external efficacy has been closely associated with the concept of political trust (Craig, 1979) and has been treated as an indicator of diffuse support (Easton, 1965; Iyengar, 1980).

This distinction has been regarded as the major advancement in the political efficacy literature and it informs subsequent conceptualisation (Lane, 1959; Balch, 1974; McPherson et al., 1977; Craig et al., 1990; Morrel, 2003). However, like the early conceptualisation of political efficacy, the two dimensions have been criticised for being too broad. For example, the definition of internal efficacy still comprises of three components: first, the general feeling that one is capable of exerting influence; secondly, the perception that one can execute political actions, if given the opportunity; and finally, the ability to understand political affairs (including having certain skills or knowledge) (Sohl, 2014: 36-37). On the other hand, external efficacy has been correlated with political trust and as a measure of political support, in particular diffuse support (Balch, 1974; Iyengar, 1980; Craig et al., 1990).

The broad nature of each dimension of political efficacy (either internal or external efficacy) is problematic because it raises concerns on the validity and reliability of the measurement of internal efficacy (Morrell, 2003; Sohl, 2014). Including different attitudes and perceptions into one concept creates confusion about what exactly is being investigated, operationalised, and meant by 'political efficacy'. This limitation remains unsolved in the literature because researchers have focused on finding a reliable measure of political efficacy at the expense of valid construct (Sohl, 2014). This section discusses in detail each dimension of political efficacy to gain a better understanding of the concept.

2.2.2.1 Internal political efficacy

Internal political efficacy is can be understood as the individual' ability to "achieve desired results in the political domain through personal engagement and an efficient use of one's own capacities and resources" (Caprara et al., 2009: 1002).With operational statements such as *"Voting is the only way that people like me can have a say about how the government run things"* and *"Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on"*, internal political efficacy is a personal evaluation variable that measures the individual's beliefs in his or her ability to understand politics and to participate in the political processes (Balch, 1974; Craig et al., 1990; Niemi et al., 1991: 1470; Morrell, 2003).

The conceptualisation of internal efficacy as the ability to understand political affairs and to participate effectively in the political sphere suggests that it includes concepts such as political knowledge and political interest which have been connected to the motivation to participate in politics (Craig & Maggioto 1982; Niemi et al. 1991; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Bandura, 1997; Kenski and Stroud, 2006; Reichert, 2016). Sohl (2014) argues that like the early unidimensional and multifaceted conceptualisation of political efficacy (see Campbell et al. (1954) and Easton and Dennis (1967)), researchers have defined internal efficacy from a multidimensional point of view. She asserts that even after distinguishing it for the external efficacy dimension, the definition of internal efficacy still comprises of three components: the feeling that one can influence political outcomes; the perception that one can execute necessary political actions; and the perception that he or she can understand politics because of their skills or knowledge (Sohl, 2014: 36-37). Combining some or all these components into a single definition is problematic because it raises concerns of validity and reliability when it comes to the measurement of internal efficacy (Morrell, 2003; Sohl, 2014).

Morrell (2003) evaluated the extensive history of the measurement of internal political efficacy and carried out a series of validity assessments in order to demonstrate that political studies and the broader world of social science need a valid, reliable, and stable measure of internal political efficacy. While his study found a reliable and valid measure of internal efficacy, the items he used still included various concepts such as understanding politics and feeling qualified to participate in the political domain. This has further exacerbated the problem of

multidimensionality in both conceptual and operational terms[5] (see Chapter 3). To resolve this issue of validity, researchers must be clear on what internal efficacy means.

Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy

Internal efficacy has its origins on the notion of self-efficacy which is a component of the Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1977, 1994). Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with the individual's belief in their ability to accomplish specific goals and to exercise control over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1977: 193). According to Caprara et al. (2009: 247) the fundamental notion of self-efficacy is that:

> "People do not undertake activities that they feel are beyond their capabilities, nor are they inclined to pursue ambitious goals, or to persevere in the face of difficulties, unless they believe they can produce the desired results by their own actions."

Bandura (1997: 485) posit that self-efficacy beliefs are not static but rather "vary across domains of activities, situational circumstances, and functional roles". Therefore, in the political domain, Bandura (1997: 483) describes the concept of self-efficacy as the individual's belief in his or her ability to bring about political change. This is closely related to the notion of the individual's "perceptions of powerfulness (or powerlessness) in the political realm" (Morrell, 2003: 589). Although internal political efficacy and self-efficacy develop independently within their respective fields of origin, they can both be thought of as expectations of one's own competency to perform a needed set of behaviours, that is, they are sets of capability beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1994, 1997; Morrell, 2005). In this manner, Balch (1974: 5) acknowledges that "psychologists have amassed substantial evidence that attitudes follow behaviour, as well as precede it".

To better understand internal efficacy, it is important to look at the two main theories that guide the study of self-efficacy beliefs: the motivational and cognitive theories (Sohl, 2014: 29). The

[5] Morrell (2003) adopted the four-item measure validated by Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991), which included several updated items, and data from the 1987 American National Election Studies (ANES) survey administration. The hypothesised items included, "I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country," (UNDRSTND), "I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics" (SELFQUAL), "I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people" (PUBOFF), and "I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people" (INFORMED).

motivational theories focus on "experiences of causal agency" and maintain that people are motivated to "produce effects on the environment, to make things happen" (Gecas, 1989: 292). This means that people only behave if they feel capable of influencing their environment through their actions. This theory is in line with Campbell et al.'s (1954: 187) understanding of political efficacy as a belief that "it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties" because "political and social change is possible". As such, internal efficacy relates to the individual's belief that participating in politics – either by voting or working in an election campaign – will result in positive outcomes, such as one's preferred candidate winning the election.

The cognitive theories take an instrumental view and focus on the perceived ability to exercise control and to perform certain political actions. These theories posit that people are less likely to perform actions they believe they cannot manage. In other words, they will not undertake action unless they are confident that they will complete. In a study about psychological needs and political behaviour, Renshon (1974: 7) define political efficacy "the belief that one has sufficient personal control over political processes to satisfy the need for personal control". This definition frames internal efficacy as a psychological conviction that helps the individual to exercise control in his or her political environment.

Renshon (1974) states that political efficacy develops from three considerations: the reward; the punishment; and the political obligation. The first one relates to the belief in the ability of the political system to provide good and services to its citizens. The punishment refers to the actions of the system that hinders the individual's pursuits. Lastly, the political obligation refers to the individual's determination to fulfil his or her political responsibilities. Through these considerations, the individual will develop the need of control over the political sphere. Furthermore, Renshon (1974) notes that the individual who is able to exercise this control is more stable, happier, and content. Therefore, the political system that allows for its citizens to exercise this kind control enjoys a less alienated and happy public (Renshon, 1974). If the system hinders the individual's need for control, then he or she will become frustrated and alienated, and eventually turnout to extreme political actions (Renshon, 1974).

While internal political efficacy concerns judgments about the individual's level of understanding as well as judgments about his or her ability to participate effectively in politics; self-efficacy emphasises the importance of assessing the effect of one's action but maintains that this expectation of outcomes is different from evaluation of one's underlying capabilities. In particular, Bandura (1977: 193) distinguishes between outcome expectation and efficacy

expectation. The former refers to one's evaluation of the extent to which a particular behaviour will result in a desired outcome. On the contrary, efficacy expectation is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome" (Bandura, 1977: 193). The expectation of being able to act successfully in order to achieve the objective aimed for is closely relate to the feelings of capability in understanding politics and being capable to influence it (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1965; Balch, 1974). This conceptualisation of self-efficacy leans more towards the instrumental view than the motivational explanation. However, an individual can have levels of efficacy expectations but if he or she has a low sense of outcome expectancy then action is unlikely to follow. Additionally, the individual can understand politics but not feel capable of influencing the political system. Bandura's (1997: 483) definition of political self-efficacy reflects the influence aspect, that is, political actions can influence political affairs.

According to the social cognitive theory, the most influential sources through which self-efficacy beliefs are shaped are personal experiences (Bandura, 1997). The individual's memory of previous actions influences the perception of self-efficacy to perform similar tasks successfully in future. This means that in the political environment, individuals who can absorb and process political information develop higher levels of political self-efficacy. On the other hand, individuals who struggle to handle the interactions between political actors and their implications become less interested in engaging in politics as a result of low self-efficacy beliefs. A study by Mansbridge (1980) found evidence indicating that people who had positive experiences in local political meetings became more psychologically equipped for future participation. Madsen (1987) also found that individuals who were successful at petitioning the government developed higher levels of internal efficacy.

According to Bandura's (1994, 1997, and 1977) theory of social cognitive theory the individual's self-efficacy develops from four sources including one's past mastery experiences, past or present vicarious experiences, social persuasions from significant others and the emotional state of a person. Past successes, especially those that resulted from hard work, influence self-efficacy beliefs by convincing a person that they can manage similar tasks in future (Schulz, 2005). Through vicarious experiences, the individual is able to observe the successful efforts exhibit of others and judge his or her personal abilities, this in turn provide an encouragement that personal effort can bear fruits (Bandura, 1994). Social persuasions affect perceived efficacy especially if they are from a valued, a trusted and an attractive source

(Schulz, 2005). Finally, the individual's emotional state influence perceived efficacy when he or she comes across failure and success with negative or positive experiences, respectively. This complex process is, to some extent, influenced by the individual's socioeconomic factors, such as income, social status, education, and age (Anderson, 2010).

Beaumont (2010) applied this framework to the political domain to explain and theorise how political efficacy develops among young people. He summarises them into 'four pathways to a sense of political efficacy.' These pathways are experiences in groups which are consciously engaging in political action, opportunities to acquire and practice skills for political action, engaging in political discourse in open and respectful settings, and inclusion in collaborative pluralist contexts. Beaumont (2010: 525) state that these pathways present "a multi-perspective view of the sense of political efficacy […] to illustrate the interplay of social and psychological processes in political life". However, these too broad and vague to use them as an effective theory of political efficacy. This creates considerable measurement problems at an operational level.

Just as context is important for the psychological concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; 1995), Morrell (2003, 2005) posit that situation-specific competencies may influence internal political efficacy. Political scientists have largely neglected situation-specific conceptualizations or measurements of either internal political efficacy or external political efficacy; they have instead largely examined political efficacy only in its most global conceptualization (the original instantiations of political efficacy belief measurements). Morrell (2005) argues that political scientists would better understand political efficacy when they pay attention to Bandura's (1994, 1997, and 1977) guidelines for understanding and measuring efficacy beliefs which are, by definition, bound to a particular context. Situation-specific efficacy will help "reveal relationships we have been missing, and thereby lead to a better understanding of the political world" (Morrell, 2003: 57).

2.2.2.2 External political efficacy

External political efficacy refers to the individuals' perception of the responsiveness of the political system to his or her influence. This dimension is also referred to as political responsiveness (Clarke and Acock, 1989: 552) even though there is some belief that the two concepts, while related, are distinct (Esaiasson et al., 2015). With operational statement such as *"I don't think public officials care much about what people like me think",* external political

efficacy refers to the belief that the government listens to the citizens' concerns and heeds their demands (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972, Craig, 1979; Lambert et al., 1986; Craig et al., 1990; Niemi et al., 1991). As such, external efficacy relates mainly to "features of government, and is only incidentally descriptive of respondents themselves" (Lambert et al., 1986: 707). If the government is viewed as unresponsive, then the individuals will be less likely to participate in the political system, irrespective of their own internal efficacy.

Scholars have conceptualised external efficacy in various forms, such as trust in government (Gamson, 1968; Shingels, 1987; Craig, 1979; Craig, 1990), diffuse political support (Easton, 1965; Iyengar, 1980) and political alienation (Lane, 1962). This overlap has meant that the concept of external efficacy has underwent various operationalisations and it is as a result less precise than internal efficacy (Reef and Knoke, 1999).

External political efficacy and political trust

From a conceptual point of view, the concept of external efficacy is related with political trust (Craig et al., 1990). Gamson (1968: 54) defines political trust as a belief in the basic integrity of government. In other words, it is the individual's expectation that the government is acting in the public's best interest (Craig, 1979). On the other hand, external efficacy describes the extent to which the individual perceives the political system (including government officials) as responsive to his or her interest. It also includes the belief that political leaders will listen to the individual's opinions. It is clear from these two definitions that both external efficacy and political trust are forms of political support as they indicate confidence in government - the expectation of policy satisfaction (Shingels, 1987).

However, while both concepts represent important political attitudes linking citizens and the state, political efficacy is clearly different from political trust. Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990) are also among the few researchers who have tried to make a distinction between external efficacy and political trust. They argue that the two are different when external efficacy is understood as the perceived fairness of political procedures and outcomes. However, when external efficacy cannot be differentiated from political trust when it is measured in terms of government responsiveness to citizens' demands. At the same time, however, political trust does not measure the extent to which the individual perceives the government as responsive to his or her demands (Craig, 1979; Craig et al., 1990).

According to Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2017: 577), the notion of external efficacy goes beyond political trust as it relates to the individual's perceptions about the degree to which the political system allows him or her to participate in a meaningful manner, and whether its policies are the result of the public's input. Unfortunately, researchers have found it difficult to develop empirical indicators that can effectively distinguish between external efficacy and political trust because of the lack of precise conceptual distinction. Craig (1979: 229) argue that "we are increasingly well informed about what efficacy and trust are not, yet we remain unable to agree what they are".

Research by Easton and Dennis (1965; 1969) provides a glimpse in the relationship between external efficacy and political trust. These authors make a distinction between two motivations of political support: firstly, effectiveness of the citizen's inputs (supports and demands) in policy making and implementation and satisfaction with policy outputs (the quality, efficiency, and equity of government's response). Their analysis reveals that political trust focuses solely on outputs, while external efficacy addresses both the individual's input and policy outputs (see also Almond and Verba, 1963). Therefore, political trust is a component of external efficacy (Shingles, 1981).

The political alienation research holds that the combination of external (in)efficacy and (dis)trust produce a stable democratic system (Gamson, 1968; Paige, 1971; Craig, 1979; Bandura, 1982; Sigelman and Feldman, 1983). The literature shows that there is little reason to believe that the two are mutually exclusive (Finifter, 1970). Therefore, conceptualisation of the two concepts has resulted in a typology that theorises several behavioural consequences that may result when the two are combined. In addition, the four combinations result in different types of political support or political alienation as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2. 1 The political efficacy and political trust typology

Political efficacy/Political trust	**High external efficacy**	**Low external efficacy**
High political trust	The allegiant citizen	The despondent citizen
Low political trust	The disillusioned, apathetic citizen	The alienated citizen

The first category represents those individuals who feel efficacious and trust the government institutions. As a result of their strong "allegiance" feelings towards the political system, these individuals support the political system and are empowered to participate in politics because they believe that the government listens to the citizen's demands (Paige, 1971; Bandura, 1982). People who fall into the second category are politically trusting but do not believe that the government will respond to their needs. These people are more likely to feel despondent towards the political system. They tend to also support the system and can express their grievances and criticism (elite-challenging participation) (Gamson, 1968; Paige, 1971; Bandura, 1982).

Thirdly, individuals in the third category generally believe that the government is willing to respond to their demands, but they do not trust government. These people can be characterised as disillusioned by the government's performance. Sharoni (2012), contends that this particular individual may or may not vote, depending on how receptive he or she believes the government is to his or her opinion. If this individual decides to vote, they will most likely not vote for the incumbent government (whose policies may have contributed to the individual's low levels of trust). This means that participation will reform or revolutionarise the political regime. Gamson (1968), however, states that this individual is more likely to participate in unconventional political actions such as protesting, rallying or being part of an advocacy group (see also Paige, 1971; Sigelman and Feldman, 1983). While some research considers this group to constitute a treat to the government and the political system (Muller and Jukam, 1977), other studies suggest that they are not a treat because conventional political participation and protest action are correlated (Barns et al., 1979).

Citizens in the fourth category are neither efficacious about politics nor trusting of politics. These individuals generally lack faith in his or her ability to influence the political system and are distrustful of public servants and institutions to make a difference in his or her life. These people feel alienated and suffer from apathy and hopelessness (Craig, 1979; Bandura, 1982; Feldman, 1983). They have withdrawn from participating in politics completely and their indifference makes them accept the status quo.

External political efficacy as a measure of diffuse support

Since external efficacy relates to beliefs in the ability of the political system to respond to its citizens, it is also used as an indicator of diffuse support for the political regime. While the two

concepts are closely related, there is a strong conceptual difference between them. Specifically, the external efficacy is an indicator for diffuse support (Miller, 1974; Miller et al., 1979). Diffuse support refers to the individual's belief that the political system is trustworthy, fair, and transparent. Easton (1975: 444) define diffuse support as "a reservoir of favourable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed". Diffuse support is important as it helps the citizens to tolerate the political system even when those who are in office cannot meet their expectations. As such, it influences the extent to which citizens accept or reject political institutions and public policy (Levi and Stoker, 2000: 491).

Easton (1965: 273) differentiates between specific support and diffuse support. Specific support refers to the citizens' satisfaction with the responsiveness of incumbent authorities in public office to specific demands. It is a short-term evaluation that is always directed to at the incumbent government, who are judged by the people with respect to their performance or as Easton (1975: 437) puts it "day-to-day actions taken in the name of a political system". Unlike specific support, it is directed at the principles of the political regime itself and the assessment of what the political actors and institutions represent (Easton, 1975). Low levels of diffuse support have serious implications as they can lead to democratic deconsolidation. In this sense, diffuse support is the bedrock of the regime and political system, as a whole (Easton 1975).

While some researchers argue that political trusts measures reflect the feelings of both specific support for incumbent officials and diffuses support for the political regime (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974), some have argued that external efficacy is a more enduring attitudes resistant to political contingencies and, as such, is a suitable measure of diffuse support (Balch, 1974; Iyengar, 1980). On the contrary, Craig et al. (1990) argue that while there is theoretical distinction between different reference objects, external efficacy and political trust are only empirically distinct in the context of the fairness of democratic procedures and outcomes. In other words, there is an empirical distinction between incumbent-based efficacy (IBE) and incumbent-based trust (IBT); regime-based efficacy (RBE) and regime-based trust (RBT), but not between (Craig et al., 1990: 306–7). Furthermore, they base these distinctions on Easton's (1975) concept of political support.

According to the authors, incumbent-based efficacy[6] refers to the belief that the government authorities will respond to the publics' demands. Shingles (1988) argues that this type of external efficacy comprises of both the incumbents' motivation (e.g., their desire to remain in office, policy orientations, partisanship, group loyalties and personal integrity) and ability (e.g., intelligence, knowledge, skills) to facilitate citizens' input. On the other hand, regime-based efficacy[7] refers to the expectation that conventional rules and procedures for political formation and implementation will facilitate (rather than impend) citizens' political inputs (Shingles, 1988). It comprises of beliefs about the openness and access of incumbents and external efficacy of incumbents. The latter refers to (a) the institutional-based power of incumbents to implement the interests of the observer, and (b) the power of the observer to prevail over intransigent incumbents by dismissing them (elections, impeachment, recalls) or by seeking alternative, conventional modes of access (e.g., via separation and divisions of power). Regime-based efficacy may be based on assessment of formal political institutions or broader cultural, social, and economic forces which influence the ability of government to function as intended.

Craig et al. (1990), however, were only partially able to separate the dimensions of external efficacy. They argue that the distinction is "fairly tenuous" because many of the items correlated strongly across both concepts (Craig et al., 1990: 298). The authors further attribute these results to the fact that some of the measures of incumbent-based efficacy lacked sufficient clarity in the reference objects used. Nonetheless, drawing from the theoretical distinction between the different objects of political support provides a plausible and better understanding of the individual's evaluations of the democratic system.

Iyengar (1980: 255) asserts that external efficacy "is not a fleeting response to current political realities but is, instead, a more firmly embedded attitude concerning the responsiveness of the regime". Therefore, if diffuse support helps the individual to tolerate unfavourable outputs

[6] Three questions in the 1987 Pilot survey provide distinct measures of incumbent-based efficacy. They are: (1) "Candidates for office are only interested in people's votes, not in their opinions", (2) "Politicians are supposed to be the servants of the people, but too many of them think they are our masters" and (3) "Generally speaking, those we elect to public office lose touch with the people pretty quickly".

[7] Three questions provide unique measures of regime-based efficacy: (1) "There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does", (2) "Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the government is run, no matter who is in office" and (3) "How much attention do you feel having elections makes the government pay attention to what the people think - a good deal, some or not much?".

from the political regime, external efficacy helps to build and maintain the favourable attitudes towards the system over time. More specifically, external efficacy maintains diffuse support by developing the belief that the political system is responsive to the needs of its citizens. Therefore, anything that influences external efficacy beliefs will directly affect the political regime's stability. For example, a change in government may change the levels of external efficacy (Iyengar. 1980b).

2.3 The relationship between political efficacy and political participation

The literature on the relationship between political efficacy and political participation can be broadly organised into three groups: first, political efficacy as an explanatory variable to various modes political participation; secondly, political efficacy as an outcome variable that is shaped by political participation; finally, the reciprocal relationship between political efficacy and political participation (Pateman, 1970; Finkel, 1985).

Van Deth (2014: 351) defines political participation as voluntary activities that a citizen undertakes in order to influence decisions that deal with government, politics, or the state in a broad sense. There are several types of political of political participation and can be divided between conventional or unconventional activities. Conventional political activities include electoral engagement, working in an election campaign, lobbying, being a member of a political party (Verba and Nie, 1972). Unconventional participation includes informal political activities such as participating in a protest and boycotting products (Milbrath, 1965).

2.3.1 The influence of political efficacy on political participation

The first strand of the literature treats political efficacy as an explanatory variable for political participation (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1963; Easton, 1965; Easton and Dennis, 1967; Pollock, 1983; Finkel, 1985; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Krampen, 2000; Cohen et al., 2001; Reichert and Print, 2017). This strand of research has provided empirical evidence on the positive correlation between political efficacy (both internal and external efficacy) and various forms of political participation. Overall, these studies argue that individuals with high levels of efficacy are more likely to participate in political activities such as voting (Campbell et al., 1954 and 1960; Pollack, 1983 Almond and Verba, 1963; Balch, 1974; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Pollock, 1983; Finkel, 1985; Finkel, 1987; Clarke and Acock, 1989; Niemi et ai, 1991; Blais, 2000; Cohen et al., 2001),

contacting public officials about issues of concern (Pollack, 1983); working in election campaigns (Finkel, 1985, Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993), and becoming psychologically active in politics (Almond and Verba, 1963; Cohen et al., 2001). These studies characterise political efficacy as a stable trait that helps the individual overcome the costs of participation (Lane, 1959; Easton and Dennis, 1967; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993).

As established in the previous section, political efficacy comprises of two distinct dimensions: internal and external efficacy. These two components have different effects on the likelihood to participate in politics as they tap into different aspect of the individual's perceptions. Research in this strand of the literature also argue that different combinations of the two political efficacy dimensions may result in different modes of political participation (Pollock, 1983, Kenski and Jomini, 2004). According to Pollock (1983) individuals with high levels of external efficacy are more likely to vote, while those with increased internal efficacy are more likely to contact public officials. Those with low levels of both internal and external efficacy are more likely to withdraw from politics, while those with high levels of both dimensions are most likely to participate in the political system.

Unfortunately, few empirical studies have explored this internal-external efficacy relationship. Litt (1963) found that a large proportion of his sample had high levels of political competence (internal efficacy) but at the same time also regarded the political system as corrupt and the politicians as untrustworthy. Madsen (1987) theorised that individuals with low external political efficacy and low external political efficacy do not engage in politics and are apathetic to the political system, while individuals with high external political efficacy and high internal political efficacy engage in conventional forms of participation (such as voting) and support the political system. Citizens with low external political efficacy, but high internal political efficacy are most likely to engage in protest-oriented forms of participation and have a sense of grievance. On the contrary, citizens with high external political efficacy and low internal political efficacy have a similar behaviour with the ones in the first group: they do not engage in politics and are despondent regarding the political system (Madsen, 1987).

Table 2. 2 Madsen's political efficacy and political participation typology

Efficacy types and attitudes associated with them	**Low Internal Efficacy**	**High Internal Efficacy**
Low External Efficacy	Less likely to engage in the political system.	Citizen is less likely to vote, but more likely to engage in protest-oriented participation.
High External Efficacy	Less likely to engage in any form of political participation due to feelings of despondency towards the political system.	Most likely to engage in conventional participation and maintains strong support for the political system.

Source: Madsen (1987); Sheerin (2007: 43).

2.3.2 The influence of political participation on political efficacy

The second strand of the literature has focused on the determinants of political efficacy (Finkel, 1985; Finkel 1987; Lambert et al., 1986; Karp and Banducci and Karp, 2003). Unlike the voluminous literature above, studies in this research take an alternative track and investigate how political behaviours influence political efficacy attitudes (Cohen et al., 2001; Kenski and Stroud 2006). In general, the evidence from these studies has shown that political participation increases levels of political efficacy. According to Finkel (1985: 893) "as one participates in politics, one acquires political skills and perception of self-competence, qualities necessary for popular self-government and effective control over one's environment". Therefore, as people attend political campaigns, attempt to persuade others to vote, contribute financial resources to a party or vote in the election, the more likely they are to develop efficacy (Finkel, 1987).

Stenner-Day and Fischle (1992) found that conventional modes of participation, such as partisanship and community activism, increases levels of internal efficacy; while unconventional participation, such as protest activity, weakens it. Finkel (1985) found that voting and working in an election campaign increases levels of external efficacy but not internal efficacy. This means the more an individual engages in these activities, the more likely they are to be confident in the responsiveness of political system. However, such participation does not influence their personal political confidence. In contrast, Clarke and Acock (1989)

found that neither the act of voting nor campaign participation impacts voter internal or external efficacy.

Clarke and Acock (1989) proposed three theoretical mechanisms by which political participation influences the individual's levels of political efficacy. The first mechanism is called the 'pure participation' effects, suggesting that participation in political processes will increase feelings that the government is responsive to the citizens' actions. Assuming that this model holds, one can expect that the individual who engages in elections or political campaign to be politically efficacious than those who do not vote or campaign. The second mechanism is known as the 'outcome-contingent' effect, and it posits that the individual's attitudes are mediated by both participation and outcomes. Political outcome may refer to the individual's preferred candidate winning in the elections. In this case, political participation increases external efficacy "because of the belief that elected officials are predisposed to attend to the needs and demands of those who assisted their candidacies" (Clarke and Acock, 1989: 553). In contrast, the desirable outcomes increase one's internal efficacy "because those who voted for or campaigned for winning candidates will tend to conclude that they can influence the political process" (Clarke and Acock, 1989: 553). Finally, the 'pure-outcomes' effects suggests that outcomes shape one's attitudes, hence those who "support winning candidates will experience increased external and internal efficacy regardless of whether they actually participated in the election" (Clarke and Acock, 1989: 553).

2.3.3 The causal relationship between political efficacy and political participation

The third and final strand of the literature has shown that there exists a reciprocal relationship between political efficacy and political participation (Finkel, 1985; Finkel, 1987). The premise of this relationship is that people participate because they feel efficacious because they participate (Rosenstone and Hanse, 1993). Stenner-Day and Fischle (1992: 301) state that,

> "as individuals' perceptions of internal and external efficacy influence their tendency to participate in politics, equally their participation in different kinds of political activity impacts back on their perceptions both of their own competence to participate [internal efficacy], and of the responsiveness of political institutions and processes [external efficacy]."

Finkel (1985) found a reciprocal causal relationship between several modes of political participation and internal and external political efficacies. Each political behaviour causes a unique pattern of effects and in a manner that is unique to different citizens. For example, voting was found to heighten positive feelings towards government departments and increase appreciation of the values that these departments stand for; however, it had a minimal effect on efficacy. The study established that voting enhances external political efficacy. Participatory habit will result from increased external efficacy due to successful participation (Finkel, 1985).

While Finkel's (1985) results indicate that external efficacy predicts voting and campaign participation; these participatory actions do not predict internal efficacy. When he replicated these findings in Western Europe, Finkel (1987) found that there was in fact a reciprocal relationship between internal efficacy and participation in campaign elections; and that voting only had a minimal effect on internal efficacy. Finkel (1987) explains that this difference results from the different levels of personal involvement, with campaign efficacy requiring more than voting.

2.4 The influence of political efficacy on voter turnout

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. Therefore, this study draws on the first strand of literature discussed above. While this literature address political participation as a while, this research aims to focus on voter turnout.

The early research indicate that political efficacy is a strong predictor of voter turnout (Campbell et al., 1954; Shaffer, 1981; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982). Shaffer (1981: 74) found evidence that a decline in political efficacy contributed to a decline in voter turnout. Shaffer's (1981: 75) argues that while voter turnout declined by 8.5% between 1960 and 1974, if political efficacy had not declined, turnout would have only declined by 2.8 %. Abramson and Aldrich (1982) also found that the decline in voter turnout is a result of decreased levels of external efficacy. More specifically, they find evidence that turnout in the presidential elections would have been 80.5% in 1964, 81% in 1968, 76.4% in 1972, 78.2% in 1976, and 77.7% in 1980 if levels of external efficacy had not decreased (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982: 512). Moreover, these authors did not only attribute the decline in turnout to the low levels of external efficacy, but also to changing patterns of partisanship among the population. According to Rosenstone and Hansen (1993: 144-145), those who have high internal efficacy are about 2.9% more likely

to vote than people who have low internal efficacy. In contrast, individuals who are externally efficacious are about 10.6% more likely to vote (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993).

One way to understand the influence of political efficacy on voter turnout is to look at the calculus of voting: R = PC – C + D (Downs, 1957; Ricker and Ordershook, 1968), where R is the reward that an individual gets from voting, and it is a result of P which refers to the probability that the vote will be important in the election and B represents the instrumental benefits of one's preferred candidate win; minus C which is the cost of voting and an addition of D which includes the psychological benefits of voting (Gomez and Hansford, 2014: 312). Political efficacy is rooted in the "D" category which relates to the perceive benefit of "affirming [one's] efficacy in the political system" (Riker and Ordershook, 1968: 28). It relates to the benefit the individual will gains from voting that exceeds the costs of voting, giving him or her the incentive to vote (Almond and Verba, 1963; Ricker and Ordershook, 1968; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982).

Rational choice theorists maintain that the chance of any individual's vote making a difference to the outcome of the election is extraordinarily slight (Wattenberg, 2011: 87). However, high levels of political efficacy help the citizen to overcome the belief that his or her engagement in elections is meaningless, and as such decreases the cost of voting that lead them to choose to turn out in Election Day (Karp and Banducci, 2008). In this manner, that political efficacy can be understood as trait that combines elements of motivation and rationality; and as such must be considered "as a motivational factor in rational pathways" to voting behaviour (Finkel, 1985; Reichert, 2016: 223). Thus, when it comes to elections, it is unlikely that voters will cast a ballot if they feel they have no influence over government actions, do not feel voting is an essential civic act, or do not feel the elections is competitive enough to make their votes matter to the outcome (Pammett and LeDuc, 2003: 1).

The levels of both internal and external political efficacy vary from individual to individual (depending on their political experiences and attitudes) and can influence the decision to vote, or not vote in elections differently. According to Pollock III (1983) individuals with low levels of both internal and external efficacy are more likely to withdraw from politics in general and therefore are less likely to vote. On the other hand, those with increased levels of both internal and external efficacy are more likely to vote (Pollock, 1983). Ruxton and Saunders (2016) also hypothesise that individuals with high internal efficacy and low external efficacy (which leads to political alienation) are more likely to abstain from voting, but are more likely to participate

in other modes of political participation, such as election campaign. However, this combination can result to voting in election for those who are more educated because their beliefs of political competence overcomes the lack of system responsiveness (Ruxton and Saunders, 2016). However, where the combination of low levels of internal efficacy and high external efficacy will most likely encourage voting for those who are less educated. For this group of individuals, the structure of political system makes up for a lack of the individual's competence (Ruxton and Saunders, 2016).

A study conducted by Dassonneville (2012: 34) found that politically inefficacious individuals are more likely to be 'floating voters' with unstable party preferences and vote intentions. On the other hand, those with high levels of political efficacy are confident in the value of their participation and tend to be more stable in their intentions to vote. Moreover, Dassonneville (2012: 33) found that voters who are 'institutionally disaffected' are more likely to think that "their vote makes no difference and has no impact", in turn, these voters tend to switch their intensions both during the campaign period and elections.

A large body of empirical research found that the individual's initial decision to vote is based on his or her external efficacy beliefs. Grönlund and Setälä (2007) demonstrate that external efficacy is a stronger predictor of voter turnout than other related measures that have been used to explain turnout in the past, such as political trust and satisfaction with democracy. In models including measures of external efficacy, political trust, satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with the incumbent regime, only external efficacy is a robust and statistically significant predictor of voter turnout. This suggests that voter beliefs about whether public institutions are responsive to their demands are more important for explaining political participation in the form of voter turnout than whether voters trust those institutions or are satisfied with the current regime and democracy at large (Grönlund and Setälä, 2007: 418). However, more research is needed to fully understand this mechanism.

In some instances, high internal efficacy may correspond with high turnout, individuals believing they should and can be playing a role in politics. However, in other cases, if politics is viewed as closed and unresponsive, a democratic deficit effect might take hold in which individuals want to play a role but are frustrated that they cannot to the desired extent. A low sense of internal political efficacy, contrastingly, is always likely to limit turnout potential since individuals will lack confidence in their ability to participate, electorally or otherwise.

The link between political efficacy and voting turnout is both clear and more complicated than what one would suspects at first glance. For example, the individual's initial willingness to vote has been shown to depend on their external political efficacy, i.e. their faith in the election institution. At the same time, the act of voting increases a person's personal internal efficacy, and in subsequent elections internal efficacy also becomes a factor influencing the odds of voting (Harder & Krosnick, 2008). Ruxton and Saunders (2016: 4) posit that voting itself,

> "serve as a positive feedback loop in which the connection an individual sees between his or her vote and actions taken in elected government reinforces his or her feeling of having an impact, which in turn spurs him or her to continue to vote in subsequent elections; thus, it makes the individual a complete participator".

Drawing from Bandura's (1977) research which shows that successfully completing a task boosts one's feelings of efficaciousness in that domain, which should make the task more easy and likely to be completed in the future. One can expect that participating in politics by voting should increase the individual's political efficacy. Specifically, voting should increase one's internal political efficacy more than one's external political efficacy. Internal political efficacy is self-referential and going to the polls or not going to the polls is carried out by the individual. Valentino et al. (2009) use American National Elections Studies (ANES) panel data to demonstrate that voting is associated with increased levels of internal political efficacy, especially if the voter's favoured candidate wins the election, which makes the person more likely to vote in the future. Therefore, the efficacy and mood reward should make voting more likely in the future and speed up the habit formation process.

The "pure participation" and "outcome-contingent" effect hypothesis (discussed in section 2.3.2) may also provide mechanism to explain the positive influence of elections on political efficacy. Considering these theories, Finkel (1985 and 1987) found compelling evidence that supports the argument that electoral participation reinforces perceptions of system responsiveness. When it comes to voting people, who support the winning party or candidate will most likely feel efficacious because they expect them to be responsive to their demands when they win (Acock and Clarke, 1989: 553). And because the electoral outcome itself is a result of the preferences of the people, it means that elections can influence the citizens political efficacy, especially among those who believe that their engagement in electoral processes legitimises the political authorities (Ginsberg and Weissberg, 1978: 49). However, Acock and Clarke (1989) found that pre-election internal efficacy had an influence on post-election

external efficacy; however, pre-election external efficacy did not have influence on post-election internal efficacy. This means that supporting a winning candidate or party will increase levels of external efficacy. The evidence from these studies provide a powerful reason to expect reciprocal relationships between turnout and efficacy.

Drawing from the external efficacy-trust hypothesis, the voter must first be interested in whether the politicians promote policies which the they themselves prioritises (responsiveness) and then whether they can be confident in these being followed through in an acceptable way (trust). The perceptions of responsiveness can suffer if an individual is also cynical about the honesty of the manifesto promises. Shingles (1981) argues that despite high levels of internal efficacy, distrustful black Americans are more likely to vote than their white counterparts with similar characteristics. This is because of they have collective efficacy or 'black group consciousness' which translates into increased levels of internal efficacy and low levels of trust, and subsequently increased participation (Shingles, 1981). Using data from the 1996 National Black Election Study, Mangum (2003) found evidence that group efficacy is important for voting behaviour among black people and that individual efficacy does not matter in the decision to vote. He also found an invest relationship between political trust and turnout among blacks. This means that black citizens vote because of "a strong group consciousness, an identification as one part of a larger group that can affect change en masse in a way that the individual never could acting alone" (Ruxton and Saunders, 2016: 8).

While high levels of internal and external efficacy are expected to increase voter turnout, the literature has focussed much more on issues of measurements and methodology than on theoretical development to explain the mechanism behind the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout (Weatherford, 1992; Morrell, 2005). This limitation in the literature causes several implications such as the inability of researchers to compare findings across studies (Morrell, 2003).

2.5 The determinants of political efficacy

Although political efficacy was originally constructed as an independent variable to explain various political participatory behaviours (Campbell et al., 1954), subsequent research, however, have treated the concept as a dependent variable in so far that it is shaped by other factors. Existing research show that political efficacy is strongly influenced by individual-level and contextual factors (Campbell et al., 1954; Dahl, 1961; Almond and Verba, 1963; Easton

and Dennis, 1967; Lyons, 1970; Martinussen, 1973; Bennett, 1986; McAllister, 1992; Nie et al., 1996; Krampen, 2000; Sullivan and Riedel, 2001; Ikada et al., 2008, Karp and Banducci, 2008; Beaumont, 2011; Riechert, 2016).

2.5.1 Education

Several studies have found that education is a significant determinant of political efficacy (Lyons, 1970, Abramson, 1983; Krampen, 2000; Sullivan and Riedel, 2001; Ikada et al., 2008, Riechert, 2016). Formal education shapes political efficacy (both internal and external efficacy) by equipping the individual with skills and social networks that are relevant to his or her political attitudes. The literature shows that highly educated people are more likely to have high levels of cognitive capability to understand abstract political concepts and as a result tend to be more interested in politics (Craig et al., 1990; Rasmussen and Norgaard, 2018). According to Harris and Murphy (2012: 48) education, particularly civic education increases internal efficacy as it puts emphasis on "empowerment and capacity building". As a result, those with higher education are not only better equipped, but also feel better equipped to participate in the political system. Furthermore, citizens with a firm understanding of the political process are more likely to feel that government responds to them (external efficacy). Mattes and Mughogho (2009: 2) also maintain that education provides the individual with "the ability to develop their own ideas and critical thinking skills" which in turn increase their internal efficacy and allow them to understand and participate effectively in political processes.

2.5.2 Socio-economic status

Other studies demonstrated that political efficacy is strongly shaped by the citizen's socio-economic position (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1963; Easton and Dennis, 1967; Nie et al., 1996), and is reflective of their political environment (Moeller et al., 2014). Politically efficacious people tend to belong to higher socio-economic group (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1963). The highly educated individuals tend to have higher paying jobs and thus occupy higher status within society, and as a result they feel efficacious. In contrast people with low socio-economic status are less likely to feel politically efficacious because they are disconnected from major sources of social influence (Nie et al., 1996: 811). In addition, individuals with low socio-economic status also lack the cognition to believe they can engage in politics (Pateman, 1970), and politics may therefore be simply too difficult for them to understand.

2.5.3 Age

It is generally assumed that older people have higher levels of political efficacy than their younger counterparts (Abramson, 1983; Karp and Banducci, 2008). Research shows that internal and external political efficacy develops through the process of political socialisation during childhood and adolescence (Easton and Dennis, 1967). Easton and Dennis (1967) studied political efficacy in children as young as third grade and discovered that this disposition is an antecedent to understanding of or knowledge about politics. They found that efficacy can develop in the absence of political knowledge, sophistication, education, or even experience. Therefore, children already have political efficacy and these beliefs increase as they grow older. A similar correlation between political efficacy and age was observed by Campbell et al. (1960). However, the acquisition of political efficacy goes beyond early socialisation, and Easton and Dennis (1965: 56) assert that "later experiences may upset these earlier formed images". Studies by Baker (1973), Iyengar (1980b) and Schulz (2005) also support this argument.

2.5.4 Gender

Existing research has also demonstrated that gender is an important determinant of political efficacy (Bone and Ranney, 1971; De Vaus & McAllister, 1989; Campbell et al., 1960: 490; Verba et al., 1995; Conway, 2000). Overall, these studies show that women have lower political efficacy than their male counterparts (Bone and Ranney, 1971; De Vaus & McAllister, 1989). Research by Almond and Verba (1963: 212) show that men in the Great Britain, United States, Germany, Mexico, and Italy were more likely to agree that they feel capable to influence than women. Bone and Ranney (1971) attribute this political inefficacy among women to their roles in the family which makes them to leave politics to the men. However, research after the early 1980s seemed to suggest that the "gender gap" in political efficacy had disappeared (Acock and Clarke, 1990; Verba et al., 1995).

2.5.5 Ethnicity

The literature dealing with racial differences in relation to political efficacy has shown that black people tend to have low political efficacy levels than their white counterparts (Martinussen, 1973). In contrast, a study by Abramson (1972) posit that there is no difference between political efficacy levels when it comes to people's race. Abramson (1972) came to this

conclusion after controlling for the effect of education. On the other hand, Michelson (2000) examined the distribution of political efficacy among the voting public within the minority communities of Chicago. Using a logistic regression to control for the impact of socio-demographic variables such as age, income, and education, he found that Chicago Latinos reported both lower internal efficacy and higher external efficacy than the national average. In particular, the study found that citizenship and the duration of naturalization associated positively with political efficacy. Latinos who had been naturalised for a longer period were more efficacious than those recently naturalized. Puerto Ricans were found to have higher internal and external efficacy compared to Mexicans. The study also discovered a relationship between political efficacy and political participation. Participants with higher efficacy scores reported a higher turn out to vote. On the extreme end, black voter who had less political power reported a low political efficacy judgement.

2.6 A review of the literature on political efficacy in South Africa

As discussed in Chapter 1, the theory of political efficacy has received little scholarly attention in South Africa. This section summarises the findings of the existing research on political efficacy in South Africa, revealing its gaps and limitations. Some of the South African studies devoted to political efficacy have generally measured the concept using one or two items related only to one dimension of the concept (either internal or external efficacy) despite the fact that it is traditionally measured as an index developed from more indicators (Campbell et al., 1954; Balch, 1974). Moreover, these South African studies tend to focus of the political efficacy of young South Africans, instead rather than exploring its effects by generalising for the entire population.

In a study about on youth political participation in South Africa, Mattes and Richmond (2015) concluded that young South Africans demonstrate low levels of political efficacy. However, their measurement of political efficacy includes only one dimension of political efficacy, that is, internal efficacy. The results from this study indicate that political efficacy is the second most significant predictor of contacting officials, after membership in a community group.

In a similar vein, Schulz-Herzenberg (2019b) found the low voter turnout among young South Africans can be explained by their low levels of external efficacy. According to Schulz-Herzenberg (2019b) low levels of internal efficacy may produce cynical attitudes towards representational procedures like elections. She also argues that young people may well lack

internal efficacy as a result of low-quality education stating that "a lack of cognitive confidence towards political affairs, compounded by uneven access to quality education, may act as a serious impediment to electoral participation" (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019b: 22).

A quantitative study conducted by the Centre for Social Development in Africa called the '*Youth transitions in South African communities'*, point to low external efficacy when they found that that young South Africans care about politics and their roles as citizens, but they do not believe that the government could or would address their concerns. The study concludes that while the youth is well-informed about current affairs and were passionate to express their opinions, they were unwilling to vote (Patel and Graham, 2019). Thus, they do not believe that their vote would bring about change.

Unlike the two three studies above, the study by Roberts, Struwig and Grossberg (2017) on voting attitudes among men and women, included both dimensions of political efficacy. The study found that political efficacy matters in the decision to vote in municipal elections. One of the three internal efficacy measures ('my vote makes a difference') had a significant and positive regression coefficient for women and men alike; while for men another internal efficacy item ('vote will ensure I receive quality services') was also a significant predictor. This means that a belief in the power of the vote to influence political outcomes is a crucial factor in electoral choice. For women, external efficacy was found to be important to some degree, with those who believe it is one's duty to vote also increases the odds that women (but not men) will vote in municipal elections. The study found evidence that political efficacy encourages turnout in local elections. The scholars concluded that "there is an inherent risk that these values might, over time, be increasingly challenged and eroded by rising disaffection about the supply of democracy and performance of political institutions in the country" (Roberts et al., 2017: 30-31).

Another study explored the impact of deliberation on internal and external efficacy among students at the University of Cape Town (Bogaards, 2017). Although the study hypothesised that deliberation would increase both internal and external efficacy, it found that students were less confident about their capabilities to explain politics to others after deliberation. Just six of students' confidence increased, and 14 participants felt unsure afterwards. At the same time, overall levels of confidence in one's ability to understand politics increased slightly, but not significantly. This suggest that deliberation had a paradoxical effect: participants felt significantly more knowledgeable, more confident about their ability to understand politics,

but less confident about explaining politics to others. One interpretation is that deliberation is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced and cannot be taken for granted (Bogaards, 2017: 10).

2.7 Summary

The reviewed literature indicates that there is a lack of a clear and more stringent definition of political efficacy. In particular, there is definitive meaning of the concept as researchers define and measure it according to their understanding. This trend is clear especially when it comes to the dimensions of the political efficacy and their relationship with other elements of an individual's belief system. Internal and external political efficacy are respectively correlated with a range of aspects of political culture. The definitions of internal efficacy tend to be connected to political interest, knowledge, and engagement (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Finkel, 1985; Pinkleton et al., 2001; Cohen et al., 2001; Morrell, 2003). On the contrary, the conceptualisation of external efficacy is closely related to that of trust in government (Easton and Dennis, 1965; Gamson, 1968; Craig et al., 1990; Niemi et al., 1991; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017), and it is considered a measure of diffuse support (Iyengar, 1980) and a stronger predictor of voter turnout.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. Chapter 2 discussed the existing literature on the concept of political efficacy and its influence on voter turnout. The reviewed literature provides grounds for the development of this study's investigation in South Africa. The current chapter provides a discussion on the research approach used to answer the research questions and test the related hypotheses. Section 3.2 discusses the research design employed in this study. Section 3.3 describes the secondary quantitative survey research methodology adopted by this study. Section 3.4 provides a description of the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP) post-election survey questionnaires that are utilised. The following sections outlines the operationalisation of the variables under investigation as well as the statistical analysis techniques that will be undertaken to answer the research questions. The last section discusses the ethical considerations associated with this study.

3.2 Research design

As stated in Chapter 1, aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which political efficacy influences individual-level voter turnout in the 2014 and 2019 elections in South Africa. Secondly, it aims to determine which of the two dimensions of political efficacy (internal or external efficacy) has the strongest influence on the decision to vote or not (voter turnout). Lastly, it aims to determine the extent to which political efficacy remains significant after controlling for the effects of other well-recognised predictors of voter turnout.

For the present study to attain the above objectives, a research design is required. Saunders et al. (2012: 159) defines a research design as the plan or strategy that the researcher selects to conduct the research in such a way that it will adequately address the research problem involved. According to Burns and Grove (2001: 223) a research design helps the researcher to plan and conduct the study in the manner that will ensure that he or she obtains the intended results. This plan illustrates the steps that the research must follow to test the hypothesis and to answer the research questions.

Given that this study analyses mass attitudes and behaviour by examining the influence of political efficacy (dependent variable) on individual-level voter turnout (independent variable)

and controls for the effects of other significant variables of voter turnout, it means that a quantitative research methodology is highly appropriate for this study. This means that less emphasis is given to the investigation of *how* people's political efficacy beliefs relate to their decision to vote. However, this is not to insinuate that this study ignores or denies the need for further qualitative investigation; it merely insists that these attitudes need to be quantified and measured on a scale to be studied empirically (Reaves, 1986).

3.3 Research Methodology

To answer the research questions, this study adopts a quantitative research methodology. As the name suggests, quantitative research involves the testing of theory through numerical data and statistical analysis to emphasis objectivity and reliability (Smith et al., 1979; Creswell, 2009; Babbie, 2011; Blanche et al., 2010). Quantitative data is collected through experiments, surveys, and predetermined instruments to investigate the specific research problem (Naand, 2010: 79). The goal of a quantitative research is to determine how well, how much or to what extent the existing theory applies holds true. As such, it is deductively in nature as the researcher aims to "make inferences based on direct observations with the primary goal to describe the cause and effect" (Saunders et al., 2012: 145). The key advantage of quantitative approach is that the results are based on a large representative sample of the population allowing the researcher to make generalisations widely (Creswell, 2009; Babbie, 2011).

Quantitative research can be classified as either descriptive or experimental. Descriptive quantitative research is conducted in order to gain more information about the phenomenon under investigation. It is also conducted to develop a specific research problem and hypothesis. The quantitative researcher does not have direct control over the independent variable as its manifestation has already occurred (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000; Neuman, 2007). In contrast, experimental research aims to test the cause and effect in the relationship between the variables. This study is primarily descriptive in nature because it provides more details about the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout in South Africa (Neuman, 2007).

3.3.1 Descriptive survey design

This is study is interested in South African respondents' perceived political efficacy and its influence on their decision to vote and a descriptive survey research design lends itself well into this study. Brady (2000: 3) defines survey research as

> "the gold standard for measuring citizen opinions that are at the heart of democratic deliberation and they provide a powerful technique for ensuring the openness and transparency of the democratic process through studies of democratic institutions."

Although the assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviours is often complex, "public opinion surveys provide a valuable tool for researchers" (Dalton, 2002: 2). Public opinion survey research can be conducted through the administration of a survey or questionnaire to a sample of the population to obtain in-depth data, which can be used to generalise the results to the larger population (Mouton, 2001; Maree, 2007; Saunders et al., 2012). To achieve this, the researcher should randomly select a sample of respondents that has the characteristics that are identical to the larger population from which it is selected. Therefore, rather than having to rely upon personal acquaintances to gather information about a particular group, survey research design and random sampling can be used to ensure a representative and unbiased picture of the group (Brady, 2000). With a representative sample of a population, the researcher can make reliable generalisations about the distribution of attitudes and opinions (Dalton, 2002).

To realise this objectivity, the researcher should use instruments such as standardised questionnaires to collect data (Maree, 2007). The survey questionnaires collect respondents' perceptions on the phenomenon of interest through structured closed-ended questions with predetermined multiple responses and unstructured open-ended question. Thus, public opinion surveys allow for the collection of accurate information about what citizens think enabling the government to make informed decisions and policy choices to respond to the needs and preferences of the public.

Survey research is the preferred type of data collection for this study because it can describe characteristics of a large population (Babbie, 2011). Consequently, large samples are feasible, making the results statistically significant even when analysing multiple variables at the same time. The data contained in the questionnaire is reliable making the analysis and interpretation relatively simple (Mouton, 2001; Malhotra, 2004). The standardised questions make measurement more precise because they enforce the same definitions upon the participants. Survey research also possess high reliability if the questionnaire has been constructed properly; and high reliability is the appropriate controls have been applied (Mouton, 2001: 153). As mentioned above, surveys can provide accurate information about a sample, however, this depends on the sampling design selected by the

researcher (Burnham et al., 2008). Opinion surveys also offer an accurate and affordable way to determine what the larger population thinks.

One of the limitations is that the standardised nature of the survey questionnaires "do not provide the researcher with an opportunity to probe beyond the given answer, to clarify ambiguity and to assess non-verbal behaviour of the respondents". Survey questionnaires also do not fully explore a topic in depth and may miss context of social life (Babbie, 2011). Unlike direct observation, they are inflexible in that they require the initial study design (the tool and administration of the tool) to remain unchanged throughout the data collection. As a result, survey research has been criticised as superficial in dealing with complex issues which require in-depth attention (Babbie, 2011).

Another limitation is that survey questionnaires – including the one used in this study- rely on self-reported data; meaning that the respondents tell the researcher their beliefs, experiences, and behaviours (Leedy and Ormrod, 2016). While this may seem like what the researcher wants to investigate, there are two important points to keep in mind when it comes to self-reported data:

1. The researcher is collecting information about the respondents' perceptions of what they believe to be accurate.

2. Sometimes respondents will indicate answers that differ from what they do (Neuman, 2007); these are known as socially desirable responses. Although this issue is avoidable, researcher has an obligation to recognise and acknowledge that the respondents may be providing socially desirable responses.

3.3.2 Secondary data analysis

The study also uses existing, publicly available public opinion survey datasets to examine the relationship between political efficacy and individual-level voter turnout. Specifically, it uses cross-sectional secondary data obtained from the Comparative National Election Project (CNEP) 2014 and 2019 post-election surveys. Secondary survey data analysis can be defined as the extraction of knowledge on topics other than those which were the focus of the original surveys (Dale et al., 1988: 3). This study selects secondary survey data analysis because it is cost and time-effective (Mouton, 2012). In addition, it provides the numerous standard variables as well as the years of expertise of the researchers in organisations such as the CNEP.

"One of the fundamental disadvantages of secondary data analysis" is that the researcher may face the risk of using data that is not appropriate to answer their research questions (Babbie, 2011). The research is also limited in detecting and rectifying errors that could have occurred during the data collection. These risks are minimised in this study through the use of secondary data from the CNEP which is a reputable survey institution and designed specifically to investigate voter behaviour research questions such as this study (Neuman, 2007).

3.4 The Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP)

The Comparative National Election Project (CNEP) is a multi-national project of research among election study teams from around the world, coordinated by the Mershon Centre for International Security Studies at Ohio State University [8]. The project was started in the late 1980s in four democracies (United States, United Kingdom, Japan, and Russia), as a study of information processes. Today, the CNEP is fielded in 30 countries with over 59 surveys and has completed three waves (CNEP I, II, III) between 1990 and 2009, and it is currently administrating the fourth wave (2009 to present) with the addition of non-democratic, illiberal-democratic countries or weak democratic countries. The data from the diverse countries participating is publicly and freely available on the project's website.

The CNEP studies the context of elections and election campaigns (Lagos, 2008). The surveys include a common core of questionnaire items tapping into short-term campaign issues; attitudes towards democracy and democratic participation; communication channels through which citizens receive information about policies, parties, candidate, and politics in general during the election campaigns (Lagos and Chu, 2013: 90). In addition to the common core questionnaire, the surveys also include country-specific questionnaire items to examine electoral politics in South Africa. The CNEP questionnaires contains variables that that have been included in the conceptual framework of this present study, as well as are consistent with the global standards used in studies on voter behaviour.

The South African CNEP series has been held shortly after the national and provincial elections in 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019. The surveys are nationally representative to the entire adult population. The South African surveys were fielded in person, with face-to-face interviews that

[8] https://u.osu.edu/cnep/

were conducted in the respondent's home. In order to reach a nationally representative sample, the CNEP used a random, stratified and area probability cluster samples of 1300 and 1,625 adults aged 18 and older, for the 2014 and 2019 post-election surveys, respectively. This means that the primary sampling units were selected randomly with probability proportional to the population size. The primary sampling units were stratified by 1) Province, 2) Urban or rural area and 3) race (Citizen Surveys, 2019). In the descriptive analysis of the variables, the figures are based on the weighted data required by the CNEP sample design. The weights were adjusted to avoid the under-representation of certain sections of the population. The weights were turned on in the datasets before data analysis was performed.

3.5 Operationalisation of variables

Operationalisation refers to the process of turning abstract concepts into a set of empirical referents that can be measured, also known as variables (Neuman, 2007). In this study, the operationalisation of each variable included in the conceptual framework is based on existing, globally accepted measures developed by previous research.

3.5.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study is voter turnout. There are two approaches in the measurement of voter turnout. The first approach is to use official voter turnout records to validate who voted; the second approach uses survey items asking respondents to report whether they voted in the recent elections (Dahlgaard et al., 2019: 590). This study follows the latter approach of using survey items to measure individual-level voter turnout. This study uses measures for voter turnout from the 2014 and 2019 surveys. The 2014 CNEP item measuring turnout asks respondents: "Did you vote in the recent elections?", the possible response categories are (1) "*Yes*", (2) "*No*" and (9) "*Don't know*". The variable is recoded into a dichotomous variable with (1) 'Voted' and (2) 'Did not vote'. The respondents who reported to 'Don't know' if they voted are collapsed into the 'Did not vote' category. This is a standard practice. If respondents cannot recall if they voted, the likelihood is that they did not participate at the said election. Moreover, often respondents who report that they 'can't remember' or 'don't know' usually did not vote but prefer not to be honest about their behaviour because voting is a desirable action (social desirability aspect) (Dahlgaard et al., 2019).

The 2019 CNEP item measuring turnout asks respondents to choose the statement that best describes them when it comes to voting: (0) *I did not vote in this election*, (1) *I thought about voting, but did not*, (2) *I usually vote, but did not this time*, (3) *I am sure I voted in the election*, (8) *Prefer not to say*, and (9) *Don't know*. This research only focuses on the 'voting' or 'not voting'; therefore, the variable is also recoded into a dichotomous variable: respondents who selected the third response category are considered as (1) 'Voted'; those who selected the first three categories (0, 1 and 2) are regarded as (2) 'Did not vote'. The "Prefer not to say" are removed from this new variable. Like in the 2014 measure 2019 new turnout variables, the "Don't know" category is combined with the new (2) 'Did not vote' categories because respondents who report that they 'don't know' if they voted, most likely did not vote but prefer not to be honest about their behaviour because of social desirability bias (Dahlgaard et al., 2019).

3.5.2 Independent variables

The independent variables for this study are the two dimensions of political efficacy – internal and external efficacy. The study derives measurements of political efficacy from the classic ANES items developed by Campbell et al. (1954). This section discusses the evolution of the political efficacy measures in the literature. Despite its long history in explaining behaviour, scholars are still working on developing conceptually clear and statistically reliable and valid measures of political efficacy (Best and Radcliff, 2005: 535). The lack of a coherent measure makes it difficult to compare results across studies.

As mentioned above, the traditional measurement of political efficacy was first developed by Campbell et al. (1954). The authors used four items asking respondents to agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. "I don't think public officials care much about what people like me think" (NOCARE),
2. "Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things" (VOTING),
3. "People like me don't have any say about what the government does" (NOSAY) and,
4. "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" (COMPLEX).

These items investigate how and why individuals believe that they can be successful in navigating the political system and that the system will be responsive to their preference. As discussed in Chapter 2, after a decade since the introduction of political efficacy, scholars began to challenge Campbell et al.'s unidimensional measurement scale. Lane (1959) argued that the four items in fact measured two components – "the image of the self and the image of the government".

Balch (1974) was the first to empirically establish the separation between internal and external efficacy. He investigated the validity of the four items by correlating them with political attitudes and behaviours (such as political knowledge, trust, and political interest). He found that the 'VOTING' and 'COMPLEX' items moderately correlated with participation and were not closely related to political trust. In contrast, the 'NOCARE' and 'NOSAY' items strongly related with trust. This analysis confirmed Lane's claims that political efficacy was a bi-dimensional concept. Balch (1974: 24) found that the 'VOTING' and 'COMPLEX' items measured an individual's confidence in his or her own abilities to influence and understand political affairs (internal efficacy). The 'NOCARE' AND 'NOSAY' items measured the individual's confidence in the ability of the political system to respond to the needs of the citizens (external efficacy). These measures were later validated by Craig (1979) in his analysis of the 1972 ANES data.

The application of this measurement has been debated by scholars. For example, some scholars argue that the 'NOSAY' together with the 'VOTING' and 'COMPLEX' measure internal efficacy only (Miller et al., 1980, Becks and Jennings, 1982; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Pollock, 1983). Others argue that the 'VOTING' item be removed from the measure of internal efficacy (making the 'NOSAY' and 'COMPLEX' the only items in the internal efficacy measure) (McPherson et al., 1977; Madsen, 1987; Clarke et al., 2010). Another group contend that the 'NOCARE' and 'NOSAY' items measure internal efficacy (Clarke and Acock, 1989; Acock and Clack, 1990), while others put forward that the items capture external efficacy (Balch, 1979; Valentino et al., 2009).

In the late 1970s, McPherson, Welch, and Clark (1977), investigated the stability of the first four items and found that items 'NOCARE', ' 'COMPLEX' and 'NOSAY' items collectively measure political efficacy (excluding the 'VOTING'). While their results show that the 'NOCARE' and 'NOSAY items are reliable measures of external efficacy; the 'VOTING' and 'COMPLEX' were not reliable measures of internal efficacy. They argue that this is due to two

reasons: first, the ambiguous wording of these statements which make it unclear which response is efficacious and secondly, the items are influenced by social desirability bias. For example, agreement or disagreement with the 'VOTING' item indicates an efficacious disposition. A politically efficacious respondent may disagree because voting in elections is not the only avenue that they can explore to be effective in the political system. At the same time, a politically inefficacious respondent may also disagree because voting is not effective. McPherson et al. (1977) argue that the 'COMPLEX' item is susceptible to social desirability bias since respondents are less likely to admit to confusion because of the fear of being seen as uniformed or ignorant.

The ANES surveys running from 1968 and 1980 included two new items: "Generally speaking, those we elect to Congress in Washington lose touch with the people pretty quickly" (LOSETOUCH) and "parties are interested only in people's vote, not their opinions" (PARTIES). Together with the 'DON'T CARE' and 'NOSAY', these items were included in the NES studies from 1968 to 1980 to measure external efficacy (Acock et al., 1982; Acock and Clarke, 1990). Acock et al. (1985) support that the 'VOTING' item should be excluded from the measure of internal efficacy. Therefore, the 'COMPLEX' and 'NOSAY' items remain as measures of internal efficacy and the 'LOSETOUCH' and 'PARTIES' as measures of external efficacy. The 'NOCARE' items is found to load on both dimensions (Acock et al., 1985). Subsequent studies employed these indicators in studying the changes in the levels of political efficacy during an election (Clarke and Acock, 1989) validating additional revisions to the ANES in 1984 survey (Acock and Clarke, 1990).

According to Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990), the lack of agreement in the operationalisation in political efficacy results in a loss of cross-temporal and cross-national validity. Craig and his colleagues (1990) attempted to address the concerns raised by other researchers when it comes to the validity of the items use to measure internal and external efficacy (Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Shingles, 1988; and Acock, Clarke, and Stewart, 1985). They also attempted to create an external efficacy measure which was distinguishable from political trust. Craig et al. (1990: 290) argue that the,

> "Traditional measures of political efficacy and trust are often maligned because of their lack of validity and reliability. Items intended to tap one type of orientation actually tap another, or else are so poorly worded that we cannot be certain what they measure;

supposedly unidimensional scales turnout to be multidimensional; relationships with theoretically relevant criterion variables are weak or inconsistent; and so on."

To resolve this issue, they recommended the new internal and external efficacy items which are distinguishable from political trust, and which provide some sort of continuum with regards to the existing measures.

Internal political efficacy:

1. "I feel that I could do a good job in public office as most other people" (PUBOFF)
2. "I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics" (SELFQUAL)
3. "I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people" (INFORMED)
4. "I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our county" (UNDRSTND)
5. "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" (COMPLEX)
6. "I don't feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government" (NOTSURE)

External political efficacy:

1. "There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does" (LEGAL)
2. "Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office" (ANALSAY)
3. "If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen" (MAKELSTN)
4. "People like me don't have any say about what the government does" (NOSAY)

Craig et al (1990) find that their internal political efficacy items have high internal and external validity with concepts of political interest, knowledge and participate. The external efficacy measures are also valid, but Craig et al. (1990) are hesitant to recommend them because they combine the perceptions of the regime and the incumbents as responsive. Empirical examinations confirm that these ten items are valid and reliable measures of internal and external efficacy (Niemi et al., 1991; Morrell, 2003).

Niemi, Craig and Mattei (1991) further investigated the results from Craig et al.'s (1990) study using data from the 1988 NES. They concluded that the items 'SELFQUAL', 'UNDERSTND', 'PUBOFF', and 'INFORMED' constituted "a valid and reliable measure of internal political efficacy" (Niemi et al., 1991: 1412). However, the results on external efficacy were not clear. The data indicated that the original 'NOSAY' and 'NOCARE' items mainly measures external efficacy, although scholars have not yet developed clear measures to differentiate between regime-based and incumbent-based external efficacy. According to Niemi et al. (1991:1410), the 'COMPLEX' item "falls between the two stools, capturing aspects of both the internal and external dimensions" (Niemi et al., 1991: 1410).

Scholars continued to use the ANES survey items in the 1950s and 1960s to measure political efficacy, by asking respondents to agree or disagree to the original items. In 1966, however, the ANES introduced a five-point response scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" to the response categories. However, this approach did not resurface again until 1988.

Table 3. 1The Evolution of the Measurement of Political Efficacy

Year(s)	**Measures**	**Response Categories**
1952, 1956, 1960, 1964	NOSAY; NOCARE; COMPLEX; VOTING	Agree / Disagree
1966	NOSAY; NOCARE; COMPLEX; VOTING	Strongly Agree / Agree/ Not Sure, It Depends / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980	NOSAY; NOCARE; COMPLEX; VOTING; LOSETOUCH; PARTIES	Agree / Disagree
1982	NOSAY; NOCARE	Agree / Disagree

1984	NOSAY; NOCARE; COMPLEX	Agree / Disagree
1986	NOCARE	Agree / Disagree
1988, 1992, 2000	NOSAY; NOCARE; COMPLEX; SELFQUAL; UNDRSTND; PUBOFF; INFORMD	Agree Strongly / Agree Somewhat / Neither Agree Nor Disagree / Disagree Somewhat / Disagree Strongly
1990, 1994, 1996, 1998	NOSAY; NOCARE; COMPLEX	Agree Strongly / Agree Somewhat / Neither Agree Nor Disagree / Disagree Somewhat / Disagree Strongly
2002	NOSAY; NOCARE; SELFQUAL; INFORMD	Agree / Neither Agree Nor Disagree / Disagree

Source: Best and Radcliff (2005: 537).

Despite the fact that the political efficacy items have been widely accepted as valid measures of the concept, researchers are inconsistent when it comes to the application. Some have continued to use the VOTING and COMPLEX items as measures of internal efficacy (Michelson, 2000), others use the COMPLEX and NOSAY as a measure of internal efficacy (Tewksbury et al., 2008). In contrast, Lin, and Lim (2002) used the NOSAY and COMPLEX items as a measure of the general political efficacy. They found that the NOCARE item loaded better with political cynicism items in their factor analysis. While some do not distinguish between internal and external efficacy (Pattie and Johnston, 1998), others only rely on one item to measure the overall sense of political efficacy (McCluskey et al., 2004; and Karp and Banducci, 2008), or one item per dimension (Kenski and Stroud, 2006), which they attributed to the limitations of existing datasets.

The CNEP 2014 and 2019 pose-election surveys include standardised measures adopted from the ANES items. Internal efficacy is measure by the following items:

1. People like me do not have any influence over what the government does,
2. Generally, politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening; and external efficacy is measured by the item:
3. Politicians do not care much about what people like me think.

The respondents are asked to rate themselves in relation to statement based on a five-point Likert-type scales: (1) *Strongly disagree*, (2) *Disagree*, (3) *Neither agree nor disagree*, (4) *Agree*, and (5) *Strongly agree*. The 'Don't Know' response categories are removed from the construction of scales. Likert-scale items are widely used in the measurement of political efficacy (Craig et al. 1990). Overall, it is accurate to conclude that the CNEP items are the result of carefully instituted research on the validity and reliability of similar scales elsewhere in the world. They, therefore, constitute the best available scales with which to measure political efficacy.

3.5.3 Control variables

The multivariate statistical analysis also includes several control variables that are considered to be strong determinants of voter turnout. Age is measured with the question "How old were you at the time of your last birthday?" on both the 2015 and 2019 survey CNEP questionnaire. Education is measured with question "What is the highest level of education you have completed?" The response categories 10-point scale from no education to tertiary education. These responses are recoded into (1) *Post-secondary*, (2) *Secondary school complete*, (3) *Secondary school incomplete*, (4) *Primary school or less*. The race variable is measured with a 5-point scale which is recoded into (1) *White* (2) *African* (3) *Coloured* (4) *Indian/Chinese*.

Campaign interest is measured with the question "Thinking back to the May 2014 election, how closely did you follow this election campaign?" There were five possible response options and are recoded into (1) *Not closely at all*, (2) *Not very closely*, (3) *Fairly closely*, (4) *Very closely*. The 'Don't know' response is removed from the contraction of the new scale. Strength of partisanship is measured with a question "Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close. or not very close?" There are four possible responses (1) *Non-partisan,* (2) *Not very close*, (3) *Somewhat close*, (4) *Very close*. These were recoded into a dichotomous variable with (1) Yes and (2) No. Spouse or partner turnout is measured with the question "Which party, if any, did your spouse/ partner support in the last election?" (1) *Spouse did not vote* (2) *Spouse voted*. Organisational membership is measured with a question "Do you belong to any trade union or other organisation?" There are two response categories (1) *No* (2) *Yes*. Government evaluation is measures with the question "Thinking of the most important problem facing South Africa at that time, how well or badly would you say the ANC government handled that issue over the previous year?" The five-point scale is recoded into (1) *Very badly*, (2) *Badly*, (3), *Well*, (4) *Very well*.

3.6 Statistical procedures and data analysis

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. This study makes use of two statistical analyses. First, a bivariate analysis is undertaken to explore the relationship between efficacy and turnout. Once this relationship has been identified, a multivariate analysis in the form of logistic regression is utilised to account for the effect of political efficacy variables when controlling for the simultaneous effects of other established predictors of voter turnout. Thus, the multivariate model allows for a greater understanding of the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout, while controlling for the effect of other variables that influence the dependent variable. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is used to perform these statistical tests. SPSS allows the researcher to perform numerous statistical analyses of large data within a short span of time and with relative ease.

A bivariate analysis, in the form of cross-tabulations to investigate the direction and the strength of the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout. The primary purpose of a cross-tabulation is to show the relationship between the two categorical variables – political efficacy and voter turnout. In this study, the cross-tabulations will examine the distribution on one of the variables is related to the other. To indicate the statistical significance of the relationship, the Gamma statistic is reported. According to De Vaus (2013: 263), when a nominal dichotomous variable (voter turnout) is cross tabulated with an ordinal variable (political efficacy), the researcher must treat both variables as ordinal variables. Thus, the Gamma statistics is the appropriate statistic for measuring this bivariate relationship.

While the cross-tabulations identify the strength and direction of the relationship between political efficacy and individual voter-turnout, the subsequent multivariate analysis using logistic regression will provide the significance of the relationship by controlling for the effect of other significant predictors of turnout. The logistic regression is an appropriate repression technique because the dependent variable – voter turnout - is dichotomous (Barakso et al., 2014). The other independent and control variables produce ordinal and interval data, except for age which produce ratio data.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are inherent to any research (Lapan et al., 2011), with such considerations including the researcher's motivations for the study, the well-being of the respondents, the freedom to choose, and the dignity of the respondents. Given this, a high standard of research ethics was always maintained throughout this study. This research was conducted with compliance to the Ethical Code of the University of Stellenbosch. The present research involved the analysis of publicly available secondary data from the CNEP 2014 and 2019 post-election survey datasets. The CNEP received ethical approval from the Humanities Ethic Review Committee at the University prior to data collection in South Africa (DataFirst, 2015). The survey datasets do not collect nor disclose the identities of the respondents. Therefore, there is no way in which they can be traced. This study has complied with the fundamental ethical considerations.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the research design, data collection methods and instruments used to collect the data. This chapter provided the description of the research methodology employed and the rational for its use to in the present study. In order to generalise the findings from the South African population, the CNEP 2014 and 2019 post-election survey datasets were used to obtain secondary data. This chapter provided the background for the next chapter wherein data results will be interpreted and discussed in detail.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. Beyond the possibility of a bivariate relationship the study also examines the relationship by controlling for other well-recognised determinants of voter turnout. This chapter presents the statistical analysis and the interpretation of the results. The analysis and interpretation of the data is presented in two phases. The first is based on the results from the CNEP 2014 post-election survey questionnaire. The second is based on the results from the CNEP 2019 post-election survey questionnaire. The two phases will each address the three research questions previously identified in Chapter 2. To review, the research questions are as follows:

> **Research question 1**: *To what extent does the level of political efficacy influence voter turnout in South Africa?*
>
> **Research question 2:** *Which component of political efficacy matters more to voter turnout?*
>
> **Research question 3:** *What is the explanatory power of political efficacy as a predictor of voter turnout when other significant determinants of voter turnout are held constant?*

To address these three research questions, the study utilises both bivariate and multivariate analyses. The bivariate analysis is used to explore the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout. Once this relationship has been identified, a multivariate analysis is undertaken, and a binary logistic regression is utilised to control for the effects of other established predictors of voter turnout, and thus isolating the independent effects of political efficacy on turnout in a more comprehensive model. The formulated hypotheses are tested using the SPSS software package.

4.2 Descriptive analysis

The descriptive analysis summarises the data into forms that will facilitate immediate understanding. The analysis uses one dependent variable (voter turnout) and three independent variables (different political efficacy dimensions). As explained in previous chapters, political

efficacy is a two-dimensional concept comprising of internal efficacy and external efficacy. Internal efficacy is the individual's own beliefs about his or her ability to understand and influence the political system through participation (Niemi, Craig and Mattei, 1991). Internal efficacy is measured with the statement: *"people like me do not have any influence over what the government does"* and *"generally, politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening"*. In contrast, external efficacy relates to the individual's belief in the responsiveness of the political system to his or her demands (Niemi et al, 1991: 1408). External political efficacy is measured with the statement *"politicians do not care much about what people like me think"*.

4.2.1 The CNEP 2014 post-election survey

An overview of the voter turnout and political efficacy variables is presented in Table 4.1. Based on the nationally representative sample size (n = 1300), a significant majority (74%) of respondents reported voting in the 2014 elections while 27% of the respondents reported not participating in the elections. The table also shows that the majority of respondents 'agree' (54%) that they do not have any influence over government actions. Of that percentage 21% strongly agreed with the statement. In comparison, only 19% 'disagree' and 7% 'strongly disagree' with the statement, while 20% 'neither agree nor disagree'. The results therefore suggest that a just over a quarter of the respondents believe in their ability to effect influence over the political system, while a significant majority perceive a lack of internal political efficacy. It can be concluded that over half of the South Africans represented in this sample have low levels of perceived internal political efficacy.

Turning to the second indicator of internal political efficacy, when asked to place themselves in the Likert scale "generally, politics is complicated that people like me do not know what is happening", respondents who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' constituted 45.9%, followed by those who 'neither agree nor disagree' (27%), 'disagree' (20%), and strongly disagree (7%). This again suggests that almost half the respondents did not feel confident about their ability to understand the political system.

The external political efficacy measure which taps respondents' confidence in the responsiveness of the political system shows that most either 'agree' (34%) or 'strongly agree' (27%) that politicians do not care about people like them. A quarter (24%) 'neither agreed nor

disagreed' while only 15% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' respectively. This suggests that a significant majority of the respondents also have low levels of external political efficacy.

Table 4. 1 Frequencies for voter turnout and political efficacy (internal and external efficacy) variables – 2014 CNEP post-election survey

Voter Turnout	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Voted	954	73,4
Did not vote	346	26,6
People like me do not have any influence over what the government does	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	258	20,6
Agree	418	33,4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	253	20,2
Disagree	236	18,8
Strongly Disagree	88	7
Generally, politics seem so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	211	16,2
Agree	374	29,7
Neither Agree nor Disagree	340	27
Disagree	247	19,6
Strongly Disagree	89	7,1
Politicians do not care much what people like me think	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	340	27,1
Agree	424	33,8

Neither Agree nor Disagree	304	24,3
Disagree	137	10,9
Strongly Disagree	49	3,9

n = 1300

4.2.2 The CNEP 2019 post-election survey

A detailed overview of the voter turnout and political efficacy variables is presented in Table 4.2 based on the representative sample size (n = 1600) from the 2019 CNEP survey. As shown, 58.5% of respondents indicated that they 'did vote' in the recent 2019 elections, while 41.5% of them 'did not vote'. The reported turnout rate in 2019 decreased from the 2014 turnout and corresponds well with the South African Electoral Commission's official voting age population turnout rates (see Chapter 1).

The first measure of internal political efficacy indicates that 60.8% of respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that they do not have an influence over what the government does. Those who either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' totalled a third of the sample (32.8%). This means that most respondents perceive they have low levels of political efficacy. Table 4.2 also shows that that a clear majority of respondents (62.2%) believe that politics is so complicated that they do not comprehend what is happening while 21.7% 'disagree' and 9% 'strongly disagree'. Thus, most of the respondents appear to perceive their ability to understand the political system is limited, suggesting that in 2019 most continued to possess low levels of internal political efficacy.

Turning again to the 2019 measure of external political efficacy, the vast majority (74%) of most respondents felt that that political institutions and actors 'do not care much' about people like them'. In contrast, 13.4% 'disagreed' and 5.5% 'strongly disagreed' that there is a lack of political responsiveness to people like them. Again, the 2019 results suggest that most respondents have low levels of external efficacy, while less than a quarter believe in the responsiveness of the political system.

Table 4. 2 Frequencies for voter turnout and political efficacy (internal and external efficacy) variables – 2019 CNEP post-election survey

Voter Turnout	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Voted	942	58,5
Did not vote	669	41,5
People like me do not have any influence over what government does	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	420	27,1
Agree	522	33,7
Neither Agree nor Disagree	94	6,3
Disagree	353	22,8
Strongly Disagree	154	10
Generally, politics seem so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	386	24,8
Agree	581	37,4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	110	7,1
Disagree	337	21,7
Strongly Disagree	140	9
Politicians do not care much about what people like me think	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly Agree	519	33,5
Agree	633	40,9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	104	6,7
Disagree	207	13,4

Strongly Disagree	84	5,5

n = 1600

4.3 Bivariate analysis

This section of the analysis explores the bivariate relationships between political efficacy and individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. It presents the results in the form of cross-tabulations to examine whether the distribution on one of the variables is related to the other. The principle purpose of the cross-tabulation is to show the relationship between two political efficacy and voter turnout. The cross-tabulation uses the gamma statistic to characterise the association between the two ordinal variables – voter turnout and political efficacy. The gamma statistic is the preferred measure of association because voter turnout (nominal variable) is cross tabulated with political efficacy (ordinal variable), meaning that they can both be treated as ordinal variables (De Vaus, 2013: 262). The gamma statistic can range in value from -1 to +1, indicating a perfect negative association and a perfect positive association, respectively (see Table 4.3). When the value is near zero, there is little or no evident association between the two variables, and as it nears 1 it becomes a stronger correlation.

Table 4. 3 Guideline for interpreting the strength of association

Measure of Association	**Strength**
If the value is	The strength of the relationship is
0.00	None
Between 0.01 and 0.0.09	Trivial
Between 0.10 and 0.29	Low to moderate
Between 0.30 and 0.49	Moderate to substantial
Between 0.50 and 0.69	Substantial to very strong
Between 0.70 and 0.89	Very strong
Greater than 0.90	Perfect

Source: De Vaus (2013: 259)

The responses to the three political efficacy items are scaled to produce a five-point Likert-scale items, an approach that has been followed in existing practices confirming their robustness (Craig et al., 1990; Clarke et al., 2010). In order to simplify the interpretation of the

data, this study will henceforth recode and also refer to the categories “strongly agree” and “agree” as being low levels of political efficacy; the category “neither agree nor disagree” as being moderate levels of political efficacy; and categories “strongly disagree” and “disagree” as being high levels of political efficacy.

4.3.1 The influence of political efficacy on voter turnout in 2014

Research question 1 asked: To what extent does political efficacy influence voter turnout in South Africa? As was discussed in Chapter 2, studies have found a relationship between high levels of political efficacy and the propensity to vote (Campbell et al., 1954; Almond and Verba, 1963; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Pollock, 1983; Finkel, 1987; Acock and Clarke, 1989; Cohen et al., 2001; Beker, 2004). In line with global research, this study demonstrates below that South African respondents with high levels of political efficacy were more likely to vote in the 2014 elections. This means that people’s perceptions about their ability to understand and influence the political system, as well as their beliefs in the responsiveness of the government had some influence on their decision to vote in the election.

The relationship between the ability to influence the political system and voter turnout

The analysis starts by examining the association between each individual political efficacy measure and voter turnout. Table 4.4 displays the relationship between confidence in the ability to effect change in the political system and voter turnout. Table 4.4 shows that of those who report having voted in the 2014 general elections, 66% have very low efficacy while 88% had high efficacy. The gamma (-.266) indicates a moderate to substantial negative relationship between the voter turnout and perceptions about one’s ability influence government. Thus, the more one feels incapable of influencing government, the less likely they are to vote, and visa versa. The p-value is .000, meaning that the relationship is statistically significant and can be extrapolated to the South African population.

Table 4. 4 Voter turnout by perceived ability to influence politics, in percentages

Voter Turnout	People like me do not have any influence over what government does				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree not Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Voted	65,6	69,6	74,4	84,3	87,5
Did not vote	34,1	30,4	25,6	15,7	12,5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Gamma = -.266; p-value = .000; n = 1300

The relationship between the ability to understand politics and voter turnout

The second component of internal political efficacy asks respondents to indicate to what extent they strongly agree or strongly disagree with the following statement "Generally, politics seem so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening". Table 4.5 shows that of those who report having voted in the 2014 general elections, 64% have very low efficacy while 88% had high efficacy. The gamma (-.190) indicates that there is a moderate negative relationship between the voter turnout and one's ability to understand politics. The more one feels incapable of understand politics, the less likely they are to vote. The p-value is .000, meaning that the relationship is statistically significant and thus representative of the wider country population.

Table 4. 5Voter turnout by perceived ability to understand politics, in percentages

Voter Turnout	Generally, politics seem so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree not Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Voted	64	72,7	75	76,5	87,8
Did not vote	36	27,3	25	23,5	12,2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Gamma = -.190; p-value= .000; n = 1300

The relationship between political responsiveness and voter turnout

External efficacy is operationalised by asking respondents to what extent they 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree' with the following statement: "Politicians do not care much about what people like me think". Table 4.6 shows that there is a moderate correlation between political responsiveness and voter turnout. Table 4.6 shows that of those who report having voted in the 2014 general elections, 67% had very low efficacy while 82% had high efficacy. The gamma (-.204) indicates a moderate to substantial negative relationship between the voter turnout and perceptions about one's ability influence government. The more one feels that the government is not responsive to their demands, the less likely they are to vote, and visa versa. The p-value is .000, meaning that the relationship is statistically significant, and thus nationally representative.

Table 4. 6 Voter turnout by government responsiveness, in percentages

Voter Turnout	Politicians do not care much about what people like me think				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree not Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Voted	67,1	72,6	76,4	84,6	81,6
Did not vote	32,9	27,4	23,6	15,4	18,4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Gamma = -.204; p-value = .000; n = 1300

4.3.2 The influence of political efficacy on voter turnout in 2019

Like the previous results, this section also demonstrates that South African respondents with high levels of political efficacy were more likely to vote in the 2019 elections. This means that people's perceptions about their ability to understand and influence the political system, as well as their beliefs in the responsiveness of the government had some influence on their decision to vote in the election.

The relationship between the ability to influence the political system and voter turnout

Table 4.7 displays the relationship between the perceived ability to influence government action and voter turnout. It shows that of those who report having voted in the 2019 general

elections, 37% had very low efficacy while 64% had high efficacy. The gamma (-.092) indicates a weak to moderate negative relationship between the voter turnout and perceptions about one's ability influence government. The less one feels capable of influencing government action, the more likely they are to abstain from voting. The p-value is .018, meaning that the relationship is significant.

Table 4. 7 Voter turnout by perceived ability to influence politics

Voter Turnout	People like me do not have any influence over what the government does				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree not Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Voted	51,2	63,3	71,9	56,3	63,8
Did not vote	48,8	36,7	28,1	43,7	36,2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Gamma = -.092; p-value = .018; n = 1600

The relationship between the ability to understand politics and voter turnout

Unlike the results in the 2015 bivariate analysis, the responses to the statement "Generally, politics seem so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening" were equally distributed with regards to voting in 2019 suggesting a weak relationship between the voter turnout and beliefs in the ability to understand politics and confirmed by a weak gamma statistic (.002). The p-value is .959, indicating a statistically insignificant relationship.

Table 4. 8 Voter turnout by perceived ability to understand politics

Voter Turnout	Generally, politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree not Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Voted	56,2	61,7	60,9	57,5	55,5
Did not vote	43,8	38,3	39,1	42,5	44,5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Gamma = .002; p-value = .959; n = 1600

The relationship between political responsiveness and voter turnout

Finally, the external efficacy measure: "Politicians do not care much about what people like me think" indicates in table 4.9 that there is a moderate (Gamma -.147) and statistically significant correlation (p-value: .000) between political responsiveness and voter turnout. Of those who reported having voted in the 2019 general elections, 54% had very low efficacy while 59% had high efficacy. Once again, there appears to be an association between the voter turnout and external efficacy (attitudes towards government responsiveness).

Table 4. 9 Voter turnout by government responsiveness

Voter Turnout	Politicians do not care much about what people like me think				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree not Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Voted	67,1	72,6	76,4	84,6	81,6
Did not vote	32,9	27,4	23,6	15,4	18,4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Gamma = -.147; p-value = .000; n = 1600

4.3.3 Correlational analysis

The results presented in the sections above by means of cross-tabulations reveal interesting correlations between the indicators of political efficacy and voter turnout in South Africa during the 2014 and 2019 elections (see Table 4.10). As expected, there were significant and negative correlations between political efficacy (both internal and external efficacy) and the decision to vote or not in the elections. Thus, the extent to which a person feels they are capable of influencing and understanding politics (internal efficacy), as well as the government listening to their opinions (external efficacy) is related to their decision to vote. These results are consisted with earlier findings which indicate that individuals with higher political efficacy levels are more likely to turnout to vote (Campbell et al., 1954 and 1960; Almond and Verba, 1963; Balch, 1974; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Pollock, 1983; Finkel, 1985; Finkel, 1987; Clarke and Acock, 1989; Niemi et al., 1991; Blais, 2000; Cohen et al., 2001; Morrell, 2003; Becker, 2004; Clarke and Acock, 2004). However, the results show

that external efficacy had a stronger correlation with voter turnout across the 2015 and 2019 bivariate analyses compared to the two internal efficacy indicators.

Table 4.10 show evidence that the hypothesis that there is a moderate relationship between the perceived ability to influence government action (internal efficacy) and system responsiveness (external efficacy) and voter turnout in South Africa (H1) is accepted. Significant negative and moderate associations were found between the ability to influence government action in 2014 (-.266**) and in 2019 (-.092*). While the perceived ability to understand politics had a moderate and significant correlation in 2014 (-.190**), in 2019 this significance is reduced, and the strength of the relationship was weak (.002). Finally, the perceived system responsiveness has a consistent significant association with voter turnout in 2014 (-.204**) and 2019 (-.147**). The strength of the relationship between external efficacy and voter turnout was moderate to substantial.

Table 4.10 also indicate that the second hypothesis of this study holds - that external efficacy consistently matters more for voter turnout than internal efficacy. These results are consistent with those in the literature that citizens who believe that the politicians (or the system in general) are responsive to their needs (Balch, 1974; Finkel, 1985) are more likely to grant it legitimacy through the ballot. In addition, the perceived ability to influence government action also had moderate correlations with voter turnout across the 2015 and 2019 bivariate analysis (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Southwell and Pirch, 2003). These results are also expected because individuals' who believe they should, and can, exert influence in politics are more likely to vote than those who are less efficacious.

Table 4. 10 Correlation coefficients – voter turnout and political efficacy variables: 2014 and 2019 CNEP surveys

	2014	2019
Internal efficacy (Ability to influence government action)	-.266**	-.092*
Internal efficacy (Ability to understand politics)	-.190**	.002
External efficacy (government responsiveness)	-.204**	-.147**

4.4 Multivariate model: Logistic regression analysis

The cross-tabulations above provide results of the bivariate relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout. However, the significance of this relationship is best considered in a subsequent multivariate analysis. The aim of the multivariate analysis is to examine the relative influence of the political efficacy predictors on voter turnout when controlling for other theoretically important predictors of voter turnout simultaneously in one model. To achieve this objective, this study undertook a binary logistic regression to assess the influence of political efficacy and other significant predictors of voter turnout. A logistic regression is a statistical technique that can be applied when there is a dichotomous or binary dependent variable and the independent variables are either interval or categorical coding (Barakso et al., 2014).

The dependent variable of this study is 'voter turnout', a categorical variable coded (0) for 'Did not vote' and (1) for 'Voted'. In addition to the internal and external political efficacy variables, several additional variables were included in the model. These include demographic variables such as the respondent's age, education, and race group. In addition, the model includes whether the respondent's spouse voted or not, levels of interest in election campaign, one's strength of partisanship, and an evaluation of government's national performance (Blais, 2000).

4.4.1 2015 logistic regression analysis

Table 4.11 shows that the respondent's age is significantly associated with the likelihood of turning out to vote. The odds ratio shows that for every year that a respondent grows older they are 1.04 times more likely to vote than their younger counterparts. The effect of race is also significant, indicating that black South Africans are twice (2.39) more likely to vote than their white counterparts (the reference group in this categorical variable). Respondent's whose spouse or partner voted in the elections are fifteen (15.09) times more likely to vote themselves, compared to people without a partner. Respondents who were interested in the 2014 election campaign were also more likely to vote than those who were not interested in following this election campaign. The same is true for the effect of partisanship on turnout. The results show that as strength of partisanship increases, the odds of voting increase by 1.34 times higher. The respondents who identify with a political party are more likely to vote. All these variables are statistically significant and explain variance on the dependent variable (turnout) in the expected

direction. We expect strong partisans to be motivated to vote, as we might of those who followed the campaigns intensely.

What is revealing for this study is that, after controlling for these theoretically important explanatory indicators of turnout, the model shows that at least one political efficacy variable is statistically significant and runs in the expected direction. After controlling for the effects of all these other predictors, one's perceived ability to influence government still explains some variance in voter turnout. The results show that the odds of voting in the 2014 election are predicted to increase by 1.23 times for individuals who disagreed with statement: "People like me do not have any influence over what the government does". Put differently, if people perceived that they had little ability to influence government they tended not to vote in 2014. The two other political efficacy variables are statistically insignificant, as well as education, membership in an organisation and government performance.

The Nagelkerke R^2 suggests that this model in its entirety explains a notable 33% of the variance in the dependent variable. Ultimately, the likelihood of voting is associated with the respondent's age, race, spouse turnout, interest in election campaign, strength of partisanship and the extent to which they believe they can influence government.

Table 4. 11 Multivariate model: Voter turnout: South African elections, 2014

DV: Turnout (0) Did not vote (1) Voted			95% C.I.for EXP(B)		
Variables	B(E.S.)	Sig.	Lower	Exp(B)	Upper
Age	.046 (.007)	.000	1.034	1.047	1.061
Education	.078 (.064)	.219	.955	1.081	1.225
Race-Black (1)	.874 (.300)	.004	1.333	2.398	4.313
Indian (2)	.673 (.540)	.212	.681	1.961	5.651
Coloured (3)	.351 (.376)	.351	.679	1.420	2.969
White (reference)					
Spouse Turnout (1)	2.714 (.492)	.000	5.751	15.093	39.614
Spouse Turnout (2)	1.781 (.464)	.000	2.389	5.934	14.742
Spouse Turnout					
Organisational Membership		.155	.563	.785	1.096

National government performance	.057 (.077)	.461	.910	1.059	1.232
Campaign interest	0,542 (.093)	.000	1.432	1.719	2.063
Strength of partisanship	.294 (.070)	.000	1.170	1.342	1.539
Ability to influence what the government does	.213 (.078)	.006	.061	1.237	1.441
Ability to understand politics	(.085)	1.000	.847	1.000	1.180
Political responsiveness	.054 (.092)	.560	.880	1.055	1.265

Cases: 1300. R2 = .222 (Cox and Snell). .327 (Nagelkerke). Model x2 (8) = 279.176. p < .000***; n = 1300

4.4.2 2019 logistic regression analysis

Table 4.12 shows that the respondent's age, spouse/partner turnout, interest in campaign, government performance and the ability to influence politics are statistically significant and positive in predicting turnout. The results show that as age increases, the change in odds of voting also increases by 1.02 times. This means that the older the respondent is the more likely they are to vote. Secondly, as interest in campaign 2019 elections increases, so too does the likelihood to vote. The odds ratio shows that a unit in increase in campaign interest increases the odds of voting by 1.5 times. Similarly, the odds ratio of 1.79 indicates that if a respondent's spouse or partner voted, then the respondent was also more likely to cast a ballot themselves. Unlike the 2014 results, the national government performance is significant in predicting turnout in 2019. The direction in the relationship runs in the opposite direction. The worst people perceive the government to have handled the most important issues facing the country, the more likely they are to vote. This means that perceptions of poor government performance motivated turnout.

As in the 2014 model, again political efficacy appears to have some explanatory power on voter turnout. After controlling for the effect of the other predictors, again the variable that measures 'people who believe that they have influence over government' were 1.24 times more likely to vote, thus reflecting the results in the 2014 model. The effects of the respondent's level of education, race, membership in organisations, strength of partisanship, perceptions about the complexities of politics and government responsiveness are all statistically insignificant in

predicting turnout. The Nagelkerke R^2 explains a decent 20% of the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 4. 12 Multivariate model: Voter turnout: South African elections 2019

DV: Turnout (0) Did not vote (1) Voted				95% C.I.for EXP(B)		
	B	S.E.	Sig.	Lower	Exp(B)	Upper
Age	.023	.010	.020	1.004	1.023	1.044
Education	-.024	.077	.758	.840	.977	1.135
Race – White			.359			
Black (1)	-.655	.449	.144	.216	.520	1.252
Coloured (2)	-.514	.579	.375	.192	.598	1.861
Indian (3)	-1.186	.753	.115	.070	.305	1.337
Campaign interest	.420	.117	.000	1.210	1.521	1.913
Spouse Voted	1.256	.342	.000	1.795	3.512	6.872
Organisational membership	-.082	.256	.749	.558	.921	1.521
Ability to influence politics	.222	.105	.034	1.016	1.249	1.534
Ability to understand politics	-.097	.100	.333	.746	.907	1.105
Government responsiveness	.093	.127	.463	.856	1.098	1.408
National government performance	-.226	.105	.031	.650	.798	.980
Strength of partisanship	-.180	.116	.119	.666	.835	1.048

Cases: 1625. R2 = .142 (Cox and Snell). .196 (Nagelkerke). Model x2 (8) = 56.105. p < .000***; n = 1600

The results from the multivariate analyses reveal more on the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout in South Africa. After controlling for the effect of other theoretically significant predictors of turnout, the perceived ability to influence government was significant in predicting turnout across the 2014 and 2019 analysis. While these results are contrary to this study's hypothesis, they are not surprising since people with high levels of internal efficacy are

confident in their ability to "understand and to participate effectively in politics" (Craig et al., 1990: 290). This conviction can translate into action, such as voting in elections, because the individual is convinced that his or her vote will be influential in the political system.

4.5 Interpretation of results

This section will focus on interpreting the results from the bivariate and multivariate analyses. In addition, a discussion of possible explanations for the significant predictors of voter turnout will be provided.

4.5.1 Bivariate results

The bivariate results reflect the results of previous studies that report that political efficacy (internal and external efficacy) influences voter turnout in South Africa (Carter, 2011; Mattes and Richmond, 2014; Roberts, Struwig and Grossberg, 2017; Potgieter, 2019; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019b; Patel and Graham, 2019). In particular, external efficacy had a slightly stronger correlation with voter turnout than internal efficacy in both the 2014 and 2019 bivariate analysis; replicating result found by many researchers such as Campbell et al. (1954) and Finkel (1985). This is unsurprising as external efficacy relates to the extent to which the individual beliefs in the ability of the democratic system to respond to his or her vote. It also includes the belief that elected officials will listen to the individual's concerns and heed their needs and demands.

This correlation between external efficacy and voter turnout is also expected if one looks at the relationship between external efficacy and political trust (Shingles, 1981; Pollock, 1985; Craig et al., 1990). People who trust government are more likely to perceive the government as responsive, while those who are untrusting tend to believe that the government is unresponsive (Milbrath and Goel, 1977). According to the "mistrust-external efficacy" hypothesis, a combination of high external efficacy and low trust in government "provides conditions that are most likely to increase voter turnout" (Shingles, 1981). Here, external efficacy has been found to explain electoral engagement when trust in the political system and incumbent is low (Pollock, 1983).

There is no doubt that many factors have led to a decreased trust in the government in South Africa. Voters have witnessed grand corruption in the government, high rates of

unemployment, a stagnant economy, high levels of crime, deteriorating quality of service delivery and inequality (Kotze and Bohler-Muller, 2019). According to the 2019 South African Citizens Survey (SACS), 73% of South Africans surveyed believe that unemployment is the most important problem facing the nation, followed by crime (34%), corruption (25%) and poverty (23%). When asked if they believe that the political parties keep their promises, only 34% believed that the ruling party - African National Congress (ANC) keeps its promises. A quarter (25%) and less (20%) believed that the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) keeps its promises, respectively. Moreover, these results show that while South Africans see these issues as the most important challenges facing the country, they do not perceive the government as being able to solve them (Citizen Surveys, 2019). This conviction contributes to a sense of disillusionment among the citizens which in turn create voter apathy (Marais, 2019). Therefore, those who did not vote in the 2014 and 2019 elections, perhaps did not feel that their concerns are addressed adequately by politicians.

Moreover, the perceived ability to influence government action (an indicator of internal efficacy) was also moderately correlated with voter turnout (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Wood and Bandura, 1989). These results are also expected because individuals' who believe that they have power to influence political affairs are more likely to vote than those who are less efficacious. However, the ability to understand politics was significant in 2014, and this significance disappeared in 2019. This is surprising as this indicator of internal efficacy is related with political knowledge and political interest which are most likely to translate into voting (Reichert, 2016).

4.5.2 Multivariate results

The multivariate analysis in the form of logistic regressions strengthened the results from the bivariate analysis by showing the significance of political efficacy in predicting voter turnout in South Africa after controlling for other theoretically important predictors of voter turnout. The results presented in Table 4.11 and Table 4.12 indicate that after controlling for the effects of other established determinants of voter turnout, people who perceived themselves as being able to influence politics (an aspect of the internal efficacy) were more likely to vote in both the 2014 and 2019 elections. This is an important finding as it indicates that it is the individual's personal conviction of their ability to make a difference in politics, and not their ability to understand politics or confidence in government responsiveness, that matters in predicting one's likelihood to vote (Campbell et al., 1954; Bandura, 1977; Krampen, 2000a; Riechert,

2016). There are two possible explanations for these results: first, the respondents could be reading the ability to influence the political system as an external efficacy referent than the internal object it is meant to measure. Second, the South African electorate may have simply lost faith in the responsiveness of their democratic system.

Besides including political efficacy indicators in predicting voter turnout, the logistic regression model also included several control variables which have been shown in previous research to be significant determinants of voter turnout. This study found that age remains a significant predictor of the likelihood to vote in both the 2014 and 2019 logistic regressions. Older citizens are more likely to vote than their younger counterparts (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Schulz-Herzenberg, 2018; 2019c). These results are not surprising as young voters may be overwhelmed by the electoral system and its complexities, thus may prefer to abstain from voting. In addition, the literature posits that one need political experience which is acquired over time as a person comes across different policy issues and is exposed to different political parties' proposed manifestos. The results also indicate that respondents whose spouse or partners voted were also more likely to vote in the 2014 and 2019 elections. According to the literature, marriage is an important predictor of voter turnout, because of the interpersonal influence between spouses (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019c). On the other hand, race was statistically significant in 2014, indicating that black South Africans more likely to vote than their white counterparts. Although this is generally consistent with expectations that race as an information cue or social identity drives politics in South Africa (Lodge, 1999; Ferree, 2004 and 2006). However, this statistical significance is lost in the 2019 analysis simply show that South African electorate did not vote along racial lines.

Of the two motivational variables–besides political efficacy - interest in the election campaign was significant in both the 2014 and 2019 logistic regression. This finding is also consistent with the those in the previous research which indicate that people who are interested in political affairs are more likely to vote because they are invested in the outcomes of the election (Dalton 2002). Party identification is another important motivational predictor of voter turnout because it often works as a "heuristic" for voters, helping them to make sense of the different electoral options (Campbell et al., 1960). In previous elections, party identification and support were strongly correlated with voter turnout in South Africa (Habib and Naidu, 2006, Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019c). While party identification was significant in predicting voter turnout in the 2014 model, this significance disappeared in the 2019 model. These results are consistent

with those found by Schulz-Herzenberg (2019c) that the decline in partisanship has resulted to low voter turnout in the 2019 general elections. Moreover, evaluation of national government performance was significant in predicting voter turnout in 2019; the worst people perceive it to be the more likely they voted. These results are consistent with that of Citrin and Green (1986) that people are more likely to vote when they are frustrated with national government performance.

Surprisingly, education had an insignificant effect on voter turnout across the 2015 and 2019 analysis. While this finding may be highly unusual as we expect people with high levels of education to vote, it is also unsurprising since these people are more likely to be politically efficacious and as such are more likely to vote.

Internal political efficacy over external political efficacy

This study shows that after controlling for the theoretically important explanatory indicators of turnout, the 2015 and 2019 logistic regression model indicate that at least one political efficacy variable is statistically significant and runs in the expected direction. In other words, after controlling for the effects of other predictors, people who believe that they have influence over what government does were more likely to vote. The results also suggest that internal political efficacy is a stronger predictor of voter turnout than external efficacy. This is in contrast with the classic explanations that place the perceptions of system responsiveness at the forefront and place less importance on the ability to influence government actions. This is an important finding which indicates that voter turnout is associated with the extent to which people feel capable of influencing political outcomes. Perhaps South Africans are less likely to vote now compared to previous elections because they feel that voting does not make any difference to the issues that matter to them.

Unlike the other indicator of internal political efficacy, the ability to influence government action may also be linked to the individual's perceptions of the ability of the system to respond to his or her demands. This opens the possibility that respondents may be reading the item as measuring both internal and external efficacy. This means that they may responding to the assessment that "people like me" do not have any influence over government action because we lack the competence and resources to exert the necessary influence; or that "people like me" do not have any influence because the political authorities and institutions are not responsive to the public's demands. This is not surprising since earlier studies have also

debated the validity of the 'NOSAY' item which is closely related to this item. For example, Craig and Maggiotto (1982) use this item as a measure of external efficacy, while Acock and his colleagues (1985) use it as a suitable measure of internal efficacy. Nonetheless, the significant influence of the ability to influence government action on voter turnout suggest that for the government to secure the votes of the people, it must listen to the electorate, be responsive and further its interests.

In contrast, the second measure of internal efficacy (ability to understand politics) did not reach statistical significance in predicting voter turnout in both the 2015 and 2019 logistic regressions. There are numerous reasons why this indicator remains insignificant across the two analyses. Firstly, previous studies show that ability to understand politics is determined by education, and specifically civic education (Lyons, 1970, Sullivan and Riedel, 2001; Krampen, 2000; Ikada et al., 2008, Riechert, 2016). In particular, education equips the individual with greater intellectual resources which allows him or her to understand the complexities of the political system (Rasmussen and Nørgaard, 2018: 25). Assuming that education increases levels of political efficacy, one would expect South Africans to have higher political efficacy; and that this in turn will increase voter turnout. However, the current educational system has been criticised for not granting citizens with knowledge and skills. Spaull (2013: 3) states that "as it stands, the South African education system is grossly inefficient, severely underperforming and egregiously unfair". The poor-quality education in South Africa does not empower the electorate. The poor quality of education is highlighted by high unemployment in the country. Many people leave the school system with little or no skills and knowledge that prepare them to engage in the political system as active citizens. This means that the South African electorate enter the political system with low levels of political efficacy which, in turn, decreases the voter's probability to vote.

However, seeing politics as complicated is not necessarily a result of inadequate personal skills due to low levels of education. As demonstrated by previous research, negative experiences in the political system are more likely to reduce an individual's political efficacy (Valentino et al., 2011). However, exposure to such negative outcome may be less prominent among individuals with high political efficacy because they believe in their ability to understand political affairs. According to Valentino et al. (2011: 308), these people "are not intimidated by the challenges, conflicts or disagreements that occur in that arena". Therefore, for those who

are educated, perceiving politics as confusing may be due to lack of trust in government (Bennett, 1997).

Although external political efficacy had a stronger correlation with voter turnout in both the 2015 and 2019 bivariate analysis, this statistical significance disappeared in the 2015 and 2019 multivariate analysis. This study contends that this may be because respondents may have internalised a sense of personal inadequacy in influencing the political system, perhaps to a point that they blame the system's failures on their lack of ability to influence it. As discussed above, this sentiment may be captured in the only statistically significant indicator of political efficacy in the multivariate model. Another reason may be that this external efficacy variable did not vary much as it had one item to measure it.

The insignificant effect of external efficacy on voter turnout across the 2015 and 2019 analysis could also be due to the decline in partisan strength. Abramson and Aldrich (1982) found evidence to support that the decline in external efficacy is a result of a decline in partisanship and consequently is the key reason for the decline in voter turnout (Abramson and Aldrich, 1982). This may be due to the fact that partisanship plays a role in integrating the individual into the political system by mobilising them to vote. Therefore, individuals who strongly identifies with a political party are more likely to experience it as more responsive to their demands (external efficacy) (Kenski and Stroud, 2006; Karp and Banducci, 2008).

As discussed in Chapter 2, even after the political efficacy concept consists of two distinct dimensions (internal and external efficacy). However, scholars have insisted on including several concepts in the political efficacy construct which further exacerbates the problem of multidimensionality both conceptually and in measurement terms. These conceptual discrepancies mean that there will be problems when it comes to the theoretical development of political efficacy. In particular, there is a need for further research to investigate how political efficacy beliefs develop and what mechanisms explain when efficacy translates into behaviour like voting in elections. The validity of the political efficacy measures cannot be achieved when researchers continue to study and measure the concept in a multidimensional view (Sohl, 2014). Therefore, in order to be able to understand and interpret the relationship between political efficacy and voter turnout, the concept and its dimensions must be developed theoretically.

4.6 Conclusion

The main results of this study based on the 2014 and 2019 CNEP surveys bivariate and multivariate analyses are as follows:

1. Political efficacy is a predictor of voter turnout;
2. External political efficacy has a stronger correlation with voter turnout than internal efficacy in both the 2014 and 2019 bivariate analyses;
3. Internal political efficacy, in particular, the perceived ability to influence government action, is the only significant indicator of political efficacy across the 2014 and 2019 multivariate analyses.

Existing research maintains that both dimensions of political efficacy are important predictors of voter turnout (Campbell et al., 1954; Easton and Dennis, 1967). However, this study found that the individual's beliefs in their ability to influence political decision makers remains significant after controlling for the effect of other important determinants of voter turnout. This can be attributed to the social cognitive theory and notion of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; 1994; 1997). Voter turnout is, therefore, influenced by people's belief that they are capable of exerting influence on government actions. The next chapter provides a summary of the study's results and outlines recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study has investigated the influence of political efficacy (internal or external efficacy) on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. Additionally, it aims to verify the explanatory power of political efficacy as a predictor of voter turnout in the country. It began with the argument that the decline in voter turnout in recent years may be due to a concurrent decrease in political efficacy (internal and external efficacy) among South Africans. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, theories in favour of this argument are under explored in South Africa. In other words, few scholars ask whether the decline in electoral participation is related to levels of political efficacy among South Africans.

To address the research objectives, the study employed a quantitative approach which relied extensively on secondary analysis of existing data from the globally established Comparative National Election Project (CNEP) 2015 and 2019 post-election surveys. This chapter, therefore, marks the conclusion of this study. In the sections that follow, it highlights the major findings as presented in the previous chapter, draws conclusions, and closes with suggested directions for further research.

5.2 Summary of findings

The descriptive results showed that a large percentage of the South Africans surveyed can be described as politically inefficacious. These results are concerning as low levels of political efficacy influence how individuals approach voting in elections and whether they perceive voting and elections as practical mechanisms for influencing political change. Most of the respondents felt that they do not have an influence over what the government does. They also believed that they are incapable of understanding politics, and that the government authorities are unresponsive to people like them. Drawing from the previous literature, these results confirm that the decline in voter turnout may in part be due to the South African electorate feeling politically inefficacious.

The results from the bivariate analyses indicate that political efficacy was related to voter turnout in the 2014 and 2019 elections. Consistent with H1 (which expected to find political efficacy to be a significant predictor of voter turnout) and H2 (which expected to find external efficacy to have a stronger correlation with voter turnout compared to internal efficacy),

individuals with who had higher levels of political efficacy were more likely vote than their politically inefficacious counterparts. That said, respondents who agreed to being incapable of influencing government actions and who found politics as complicated did not vote in both the elections. In addition, those who felt that the government did not care about their opinions did not vote as well. These results reveal that individuals' low internal and external efficacy may have contributed to the low voter turnout rates in the 2014 and 2919 elections.

The third hypothesis of this study expected external political efficacy to matter more for voter turnout than internal political efficacy. The results from the bivariate analyses support this hypothesis. This finding is consistent with previous research which suggest that external efficacy is more important for the likelihood to vote (Shaffer, 1981; Abramson and Aldrich, 1982, Almond and Verba, 1963; Finkel, 1985, 1987). These results are further corroborated by those of the 2019 South African Reconciliation Barometer (SARB) which shown that the perceived unresponsiveness of the government (external efficacy) discourages effective electoral participation (see also Schulz-Herzenberg, 2019b).

However, only a few studies have found the same influence when it comes to internal political efficacy (Finkel, 1987; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). The fact that this study found a moderate correlation between the perceived ability to influence the government actions in the 2015 and 2019 bivariate analysis is very interesting. These results give the indication that the likelihood to vote in both the 2014 and 2019 elections can also be explained by the individual's ability to influence political affairs.

Of importance is that after controlling for the effects of other well-established determinants of turnout, the perceived ability to influence what government had a significant effect in predicting turnout in the 2014 and 2019 multivariate analyses. While the significance of this aspect of internal efficacy is consistent with previous research (Finkel, 1987; Wood and Bandura, 1989); the insignificance of external efficacy is contrary to several previous studies in the literature that has found it to be a significant predictor of voter turnout (Pollock, 1983; Finkel, 1985). These results do not support this study's hypothesis that expected external efficacy to be a more significant predictor of voter turnout after controlling for the effects of other significant determinants of turnout.

The importance of the ability to influence government action in the multivariate models indicate that it is the individual's personal conviction of their ability have an influence on

politics, and not their ability to understand politics or confidence in government responsiveness, that matters in predicting one's likelihood to vote (Campbell et al., 1954; Bandura, 1977; Krampen, 2000a; Riechert, 2016). This finding is important because it suggests that for the government to secure the votes of the people, it must demonstrate its commitment by listening to the public's interest, which in turn increases their beliefs in their ability to exert influence.

5.3 Research implications

The results of this study provide grounds for a discussion on the important implications of the influence of political efficacy on individual-level voter turnout in South Africa. Most of the hypotheses for this study are based on previous research and were supported by both the bivariate analysis. After controlling for the effect of other established determinants of voter turnout, this study found that the perceived ability to influence politics (an aspect of the internal efficacy) is consistently significant in predicting voter turnout across the 2014 and 2019 logistic regression analysis. This important finding indicates that it is an individual's personal conviction about their ability to make a difference in politics, not their understanding of politics or confidence in government responsiveness, that is the most important in predicting one's decision to vote (Campbell et al., 1954; Bandura, 1977; Krampen, 2000a; Riechert, 2016). However, these results do not support H4 which expected that external efficacy (the perception that politicians do not care what people like me think) will remain a significant predictor of voter turnout after controlling for the effects of other theoretically important predictors of turnout.

This study proposes two possible explanations for this finding: First, it could be that the political efficacy measures used in this study lack some internal validity. Specifically, that respondents may be reading the item that measures the individual's ability to influence politics as a measure of their external efficacy. That is, they may be reading it as a system referent than the personal referent it is meant to measure. This study speculates that these results occur because the respondents may be hearing the statement as an indication of both personal ability and system ability. This is a validity problem that arises from the lack of a clear and comprehensive political efficacy scale.

Furthermore, this has implications for the conceptual development of political efficacy, especially when it comes to the characteristics of both internal and external political efficacy.

Previous research has shown that these two dimensions are distinct variables that correlate with other variables in different ways (Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Zimmerman, 1989; Craig et al., 1990; Craig et al., 1991). The multivariate results are, therefore, intriguing as they suggest that the individual's perceptions of his or her prospective influence in the political system, as well as the evaluation of the responsiveness of the system to his or her actions are important for the propensity to vote.

Another possibility is that, despite the validity issue, South Africans may have internalised a sense of inadequacy about their role in the democratic system, even to a point that they perceive their vote as futile. Although there is far less empirical evidence about how the South African socio-political context affects political efficacy levels among the citizenry, previous global research show that politically efficacious people tend to have more resources than their inefficacious counterparts. Given the predictive nature of political efficacy for voter turnout, this study strongly argues that in South Africa, the high levels of poverty, unemployment, corruption, and inequality, among other factors, contribute to the depletion of political efficacy levels, which in turn translate into a decline in voter turnout (Marx and Nguyen, 2016; Marx and Nguyen, 2018a). These potential factors along with disappointment in the government on it unresponsiveness also lead to feelings of political alienation associated with withdrawal from the political system altogether (Almond and Verba, 1963; Finifter, 1970; Southwell and Everest, 1998). This alienation may equally be linked to the disillusionment about the supply of democracy and the performance of the government officials and political institutions (external efficacy) (Roberts et al., 2017: 30-31). This sombre picture of the South African democratic system provides the motivation to better understand the conditions under which political efficacy beliefs develops.

This has further implications on the legitimacy and stability of the democratic system in South Africa. As established in the literature, the legitimacy and stability of any democracy is maintained by the extent to which citizens belief in the ability of the government to respond to their needs. However, if the citizens believe that the government is unresponsive, the system itself is more likely to be called into question. This is because citizens with low levels of external efficacy tend to feel alienated by unresponsive politicians. For these reasons, the low levels of political efficacy in South Africa are concerning. It is, therefore, possible that many South Africans have a deep distrust of public representatives. However, trust is a difficult

concept to measure as it is closely related to external efficacy. A more complex relationship may emerge if external efficacy is broken down into further dimensions that include trust.

Morrell (2005: 50) warned about the dangers of low levels political efficacy among the citizenry. He writes that, "without a sense of political efficacy, citizens will likely become apathetic about, indifferent to and disengaged from the democratic process". In this manner, Madsen (1978) also posits that the only logical step for individuals who lacks political efficacy is desertion – and if they cannot physically abandon a system, they can psychologically leave it. Widespread feelings of political inefficacy, therefore, are a major concern to any democratic system.

Despite the widespread evidence that political efficacy influences voter turnout in the literature, there has been a lack of theoretical discussion on the mechanism behind this association. To gain a better understanding of the concept, future research must focus on further theoretical and empirical developments of the concept and they must examine the sources of political efficacy on voter turnout or political participation in general. This will alleviate the confusion that has existed since the concept was first introduced by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954).

This study acknowledges that the use of the global measures of political efficacy neglects the nuances unique to different contexts. This study, therefore, agrees with Morrell (2005) when he calls not only for theoretical development of the construct of political efficacy, but also for political scientists to attend to situation-specific political efficacy in experimental studies. In particular, Morrell (2005) suggests that the construct of political efficacy (both internal and external) be studied and applied to a specific topic or field (he calls this situation-specific efficacy). Previous research on political efficacy only focused on the global, conceptualisation and measurement of the concept. That is, they dealt exclusively with respondents' broadest judgments about their ability to navigate political systems and considerations of system responsiveness. A situation-specific measure, therefore, is beneficial for the scholarship as it might ask about a particular political race, hot button issues, elected official, or policy context.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

Although the results show that political efficacy levels are generally low across the 2014 and 2019 analysis, it must be reiterated that given the quantitative nature of this study it is not possible to explain why this is the case. By using a quantitative methodology in this research,

a greater generalisation on the large population was gained than would have been achieved through the use of qualitative methods. This was particularly useful because little research has been conducted on the influence of political efficacy and voter turnout in South Africa. There were, however, limitations that should be addressed by future research.

Qualitative methods would allow researcher to better understand people's perception of their power and the responsiveness of the political system. In particular,

> "In order to understand other person's constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them… and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their own terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and a priori by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meanings" (Jones, 1985: 46, cited in Punch, 2005: 168- 9).

Survey research is limited in a sense that it does not allow the respondents to express their opinions, and as such it has been criticised for oversimplifying complex attitudes that people hold about politics (Devere, 1993: 12-13). Therefore, to receive a more reliable picture of people's political efficacy beliefs scholars must use qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups (Sheerin, 2007). In-depth interviews differ from survey questionnaires in that they allow the respondents to be open in their answers, and to speak about the issue concerned using language and ideas of their own (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 6-7). moreover, focus groups presents a platform through which the participants not only open up about their opinions, but can engage with each other's views (Punch, 2005: 171).

The existing research that treats political efficacy as an independent variable has largely focussed on issues of measurements and methodology than on theoretical development to explain the mechanism behind its relationship with voter turnout (Balch, 1974; McPherson et al., 1977; Craig and Mattei, 1991; Weatherford, 1992). Theoretical development would be greatly beneficial to researchers and government alike as it would help them understand this relationship. Moreover, the lack of understanding of what political efficacy means has resulted in no or little theoretical building in relation to the influence of the beliefs in political participation and voting behaviour in the case of this study. Further research into the accuracy and the interaction of the two dimensions of political efficacy is needed as it would lead to a valid and reliable measure of the concept (Morrell, 2003). A standardised measure will enable researchers to interpret and compare results across studies. This will help them to better

understand the concept of political efficacy and how it influences the political world (Morrell, 2003).

This study calls for researchers to continue to develop the concept of political efficacy conceptually and empirically. Without conceptual coherence and clarity, the empirical measurement of the political efficacy will be limited. Therefore, in order to understand the consequences of political efficacy beliefs researchers must focus on the sources and mechanisms behind its development. This will not only solve issues of conceptualisation but will make it easier for researchers to interpret the results. Furthermore, the study of political efficacy can benefit from a longitudinal research as opposed to a the once-off cross-sectional.

5.5 Conclusion

To what extent does political efficacy influence voter turnout in South Africa? This study found evidence that political efficacy, in particular the perceived ability to influence actions of government significantly predicts the likelihood to vote among South Africans. These results are consistent with those found in previous research which show that political efficacy is positively correlated with voter turnout (Balch, 1974; Good and Mayer, 1975; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Clarke and Acock, 1989; Niemi et al., 1991; Morrell, 2003). This study also raises interesting questions about the validity of the measurement of political efficacy. As the results show, it is possible that South African respondents understood traditional internal political efficacy measures instead as external measures of system responsiveness. This study therefore demonstrates the ongoing importance of further exploration of the conceptualisation of the concept in future research. In particular, this study calls for a clearer and more stringent conceptualisation of the concept that will lead researcher to a valid and reliable measure of political efficacy.

In sum, one major finding emerged: The South African electorate believes that when they are confronted with periodic voting opportunities many have a sense of alienation that discourages participation; a belief that their vote will not influence the decision-makers and will be met by an unresponsive system that makes decisions without listening to their concerns. The results suggest the low levels of political efficacy among the South African electorate helps to explain the low and declining levels of voter turnout. The centrality of citizens' perceived ability to influence government action for electoral participation, as shown in the multivariate analyses,

also suggests that an active electorate relies on greater responsiveness by political actors and institutions in the future.

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Appendix A: Coding of variables

Dependent variable

Voter turnout: Did you vote in the recent elections? (1) Voted (2) Did not vote

Independent variables

Internal efficacy:

A – People like me do not have any influence over what government does.

B – Generally, politics seems so complicated that people like me cannot understand what is happening.

External efficacy:

C- Politicians do not care much about what people like me think.

Control variables

Age: How old were you at the time of your last birthday?

Education: What is the highest level of education you have completed? (1) *Post-secondary* (2) *Secondary school complete* (3*) Secondary school incomplete* (4) *Primary school or less*.

Race: (1) *Black African* (2*) Indian* (3) *Coloured* (4) *White*.

Campaign interest: Thinking back to the May 2014 election, how closely did you follow this election campaign? (0) *Not closely at all* (1) *Not very closely* (2) *Fairly closely* (3) *Very closely*.

Strength of partisanship: Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close. or not very close? (0) *Non-partisan* (1) *Not very close* (2) *Somewhat close* (3) *Very close*.

Spouse or partner voting: Did your spouse or partner support in the last election? (1) Spouse did not vote (2) *Spouse voted* (95) *No spouse/partner*.

Organisational membership: Do you belong to any trade union or other organisation (such as a political party, professional or business organisation, religious or community organisation)? (1) *No* (2) *Yes*

Government handling of the most important problem: Thinking of the most important problem facing South Africa at that time, how well or badly would you say the ANC government handled that issue over the previous year, that is in 2013–2014? (0) *Very badly* (1) *Badly* (2) *Well* (3) *Very well*.